

# Romans

## Chapter 9

### I. The Place of Israel in the New Covenant - Part 1

Romans chapters 9 to 11 are thought by many to be a parenthetical passage thrown in by Paul to discuss the past, present, and future of Israel. In fact, many say that the logical progression of Romans goes from 8:39 directly to 12:1. In other words, we could remove chapters 9, 10, and 11 without missing any of the message of Romans.

This is not the case. In fact, Romans 9, 10, and 11 comprise a major part of Paul's treatise on the doctrine of justification by faith. In Romans 1:16 to 3:20 we find all mankind condemned before God. In chapters 3:21 through 5 we find Paul's treatment of justification by faith. Romans 6 and 7 deal with the practical aspects of justification by faith, namely, sanctification. Romans 8 contains the glorious truth of the ultimate end of justification which is glorification. Now, in Romans 9, 10, and 11 Paul deals with the question of the Jews and their place in light of justification by faith.

This is necessary for several reasons. First of all, the Jew at this point would feel totally devastated by Paul's arguments showing their supposed righteousness meant nothing before God. Additionally, some would wonder what happens to all of the promises God made Israel that remain to be fulfilled. Although these issues are important, the greatest question would be "If God has changed his requirements for salvation, then he has abrogated his covenant with Israel, and may do the same to us at a future time". In other words, the greatest question hinges on the character of God. If God has changed everything relating to salvation by introducing justification by faith and not by law, then he has changed his mind and broken his promises to Israel. In fact, it is this point that the covenant theologians assert their belief that since Israel rejected their Messiah, they have forever forfeited their place of blessing and the kingdom promise. The greatest question, then, is "What happens to Israel in light of the Church and what does the future hold for them?".

In dealing with this issue, Paul needs to show that the current state of Israel does not violate God's purposes or promises for that nation. He also needs to show how the kingdom promises given to Israel in the Old Testament find future fulfillment and how the Church and Israel exist and interact in the near and distant future. Romans 9 deals with the question of Israel's state of unbelief and its consistency with God's plan. Chapter 10 deals with the reasons Israel rejected her Messiah and chapter 11 deals with the relation of Israel to the Church and the future restoration of Israel. Chapter 9 contains Paul's burden for Israel and four reasons Israel's unbelief does not pose a problem to the message of justification by faith: 1) Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's promise, 2) Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's person, 3) Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's plan, and 4) Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's requirements for salvation.

#### A. Paul's Desire for Israel and Their Place of Blessing - Romans 9:1-5

##### 1. Paul's Desire for Israel - Romans 9:1-3

**9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 9:2 That I have great heaviness and**

**continual sorrow in my heart. 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

Paul begins this section of Romans by revealing his true feelings regarding Israel. He does this to show that his true attitude regarding the Jewish people is not one of animosity or hatred. Undoubtedly, the average Jewish reader of Romans would feel that Paul has an ax to grind with them especially after his scathing expose of their hypocrisy. As vehement as Paul is regarding the truth of God, underneath we find a loving and caring person who would wish himself to be cursed if it would save Israel. This is not the attitude of one who despises Jews.

Paul's attitude towards the Jewish people is not unlike that of Moses or Christ. In Exodus 32:32 we find Moses interceding for the people of Israel. When Moses went upon Mount Sinai to receive the laws of God, the people grew restless in his absence and caused Aaron to make them a golden calf to worship. This so angered the Lord that he threatened to wipe out the entire nation. Moses, however, interceded on Israel's behalf and caused the Lord to only slay a part of the people that sinned. In Matthew 23:37 we find Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem because of their unbelief and rejection. The true servant of God warns people of impending doom, and weeps when God's message is rejected. Paul's greatest desire was for the Jewish people to see Christ as their Messiah and was heartbroken over their rejection.

## **2. Israel's Place of Blessing - Romans 9:4-5**

**9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.**

Israel's rejection of their Messiah is compounded because of the amount of light they had. One of the spiritual principles we find mentioned over and over again in the Word of God is that God holds every man responsible for the knowledge he has. Although Israel had the greatest amount of blessing from God, their failure to respond to that blessing will result in the greatest amount of condemnation. In these two verses, Paul lists eight specific blessings Israel had.

### **a. Adoption - Romans 9:4a**

The first blessing mentioned by Paul is that Israel had been accorded the place of adoption by God. Time and time again we find God speaking of Israel as his own possession (Exodus 4:22, Exodus 19:5, Hosea 11:1). Israel was chosen by God as the nation through whom blessing would come and through whom salvation would come to the whole world (Genesis 12:1-2).

### **b. Glory - Romans 9:4b**

When Moses completed the tabernacle designed by God, we read that the visible presence of God's glory, the shekinah, came and dwelled

between the cherubim on the mercy seat. Israel not only had the blessing of being called by God as his special possession, but they were able to behold the very glory of God as a constant reminder of his presence.

**c. Covenants - Romans 9:4c**

The covenants refer to God's special promises to Israel. This includes the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant of blessing for obedience, and the Davidic covenant. Paul reminds his readers that of all the people on the earth, the Jewish nation alone received God's promises and greatest attention.

**d. Law - Romans 9:4d**

When it came time for God to reveal his law, he chose the Jewish people as the recipients. The law in this verse can be best understood in its widest possible sense which consisted of the moral, ceremonial, and judicial components. Israel had the fullest revelation about God and the best understanding of God's requirements for blessing and salvation.

**e. Service - Romans 9:4e**

Service refers to the ceremonial observances of the Old Covenant as well as the special honor it is to serve the one true God. The word translated "service" is the Greek word *latreuo* which is often translated "worship". Israel had the distinct privilege of worshipping and serving the true God.

**f. Promises - Romans 9:4f**

When we read the Old Testament we find promise after promise given to Israel. No other nation in history has been blessed with as many promises as Israel.

**g. Fathers - Romans 9:5a**

Israel's history is replete of mighty men of God. Moses, David, Elijah, Elisha, Solomon, Daniel, Isaac, Jacob, Abraham, and Ezra are just a few of the many men of God that shaped Israel.

**h. The Christ - Romans 9:5b**

Finally, and most fitting, we find the greatest blessing of all that Israel enjoyed, that of being the nation through whom the Messiah was born. In Galatians 3:16 we find that God's promise to Abraham referred to his "seed", singular, which was Christ. The greatest promise Abraham received was the promise of the future deliverer.

**B. The Unbelief of Israel - Romans 9:6-33**

Having displayed his true feelings regarding Israel and their special place of blessing before God, Paul turns to the problem of Israel's unbelief. It is

essential that he show Israel's unbelief as a nation does not pose a problem to his message of justification by faith. The reasons for this are:

1. The message of Christ as Messiah was difficult for most Jews since they would argue that Jesus could not have been the Messiah or else he would have been accepted by the Jewish leaders. They would argue that it would not be possible for the scribes and experts in the law to miss the Messiah when he came.
2. The message of justification by faith was considered to be an aberrant doctrine. For Paul's message to be heard, he must show that the state of unbelief of Israel does not violate any promise made by God. In other words, he must show that God's blessings to the nation of Israel does not guarantee the salvation of all Jews.
3. Paul must explain the role of Israel in light of the church age which had started. Since many Gentiles were being saved, and the average Jew was taught that salvation apart from national identity is impossible, Paul must show the error of this thinking.
4. Paul must defend the character of God against those who would argue that God has nullified his promises to Israel because of their rejection of the Messiah. A careful analysis of Romans 9-11 forever destroys the tenets of covenant theology which would have us believe that God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament have been transferred to the Church. Paul must prove that the national promises to Israel in the Old Testament are still binding even though Israel has been set aside for the time being while God works through the Church.

In developing his treatment of Israel's unbelief, Paul lists four major arguments which prove Israel's unbelief is in accord with God's plan and purpose.

**1. Israel's Unbelief is Consistent with God's Promise - Romans 9:6-13**

**9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.**

Probably the single most important bastion of Jewish pride was their national heritage. They held their privilege of Jewishness so high that they taught that God's blessing was more related to your Jewishness than to your godly lifestyle. In fact, if we remember Paul's arguments of Romans 2, we find that one of the things he listed as false securities of salvation was

pedigree. Paul must attack this idea if any progress is to be made in the message of justification by faith being accepted by the Jewish people.

The importance of this proof should not be underestimated. One of the biggest battles faced by our Lord was with the religious leaders of the day who trusted in their Abrahamic descent as a means of salvation (John 8). The rabbis had so totally misunderstood the promises of God and the message of scripture that they taught circumcision and Jewish nationality would insure a person's salvation regardless of lifestyle or conduct.

To prove that Abrahamic descent does not guarantee personal salvation or blessing, Paul uses two illustrations from the Old Testament. In fact, his illustrations are not obscure or unknown personages, but two of the best known antagonists of the Jewish people whose descendants plague Israel to this day, Ishmael and Esau.

In verse 6 of Romans 9, Paul states his thesis, namely, all people who call themselves Israelites are not true Israelites (for his definition of true Israelites refer to Romans 2:28-29). He then immediately cites his first example, Ishmael. If we look back at the Genesis record, we find that God promised Abraham a son when Sarah was well past childbearing age. In his zeal to give God a hand, he fathered a son by Sarah's Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, whose name was Ishmael. When the promised son came by Sarah, the animosity and hatred between Ishmael and Issac caused Abraham to force Hagar and Ishmael to leave. Unfortunately, Abraham's desire to help God only resulted in a son who was not of the promise, but who became a thorn in the side of the Jewish people. In fact, to this day the Moslem world trace their ancestry back to Ishmael making the claim that Ishmael was the child of promise, not Issac. This runs counter to what Paul claims in verse 8, namely that the children of the flesh, (Ishmael and his descendants) are not children of God. The children of God are the ones of promise, namely Isaac and his descendants.

In verse 10 we find Paul's second example, Esau. The law of the primogenitor required that the family blessing would fall on the first-born. Esau, being the first-born, would of necessity have this right. However, God had other plans. In Genesis 25:22-23 we find God revealing to Rebekah that two nations were in her womb and that the elder would serve the younger. Later we find Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a meal. Thus, although Esau had the birthright, it was God's plan to work through Jacob.

Verse 13 has thrown many a Bible expositor for a loop since it seems to say that God hated Esau but loved Jacob. They reason that this is not consistent with who God is because God is a God of love. How can he hate anyone. However, this passage is not referring to the individuals, i.e. Jacob and Esau, but it is referring to the nations they were the fathers of. In fact, this verse is a paraphrase of Malachi 1:2-3 where we find the references to Jacob and Esau clearly as being representative of the nations they headed. Therefore, we conclude that this verse is not referring to God hating anyone, it is referring to the nations headed by Jacob and Esau. Verse 13 is clearly stating that God chose to bless the nation headed by Jacob and chose to withhold blessing from the nation headed by Esau.

At this point we are faced with a dilemma, namely the sovereignty of God. If we carefully read verses 11 and 12, we find that God clearly chose Jacob as being the one to receive blessing prior to Jacob's birth and hence prior to any action on Jacob's part that may have merited this blessing. In fact, if we compare these two verses with the rest of scripture, we find that God chooses those who will receive his blessings and his salvation. Ephesians 1:4 states "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world". 1 Peter 1:2 says that we are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God". This is a difficult concept to grasp, but is clearly taught in scripture. God chooses some to salvation and chooses to pass over others.

Lest we get off-balance, we also need to understand that man is responsible for his acceptance and rejection of God as well. These two concepts, sovereignty of God and responsibility of man, cannot be reconciled in our minds. However, for every verse in the Bible that teaches about God's election there is a verse that teaches that man is to respond. If we look at the life of Esau we will find that he rejected God just as God rejected him.

Thus we find that Paul proves once and for all that Abrahamic descent does not insure individual blessing and/or salvation. This further proves the point that the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish nation does not violate God's promises since God never promised salvation to every Jew. Salvation has always been an individual proposition entered into by faith. The national rejection of Israel in no way invalidates God's promises to that nation.

## 2. The Unbelief of Israel is Consistent with God's Character - Romans 9:14-24

**9:14** What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. **9:15** For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. **9:16** So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. **9:17** For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. **9:18** Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. **9:19** Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? **9:20** Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? **9:21** Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? **9:22** What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: **9:23** And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, **9:24** Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

These eleven verses are probably the most definitive passage in the Bible regarding the sovereignty of God that we can find. This passage teaches in no uncertain terms that God is the one who controls the destinies of men and it is God who chooses those to whom he will show compassion and blessing. In developing his argument proving the rejection of Israel does not violate God's person, Paul uses the argument of quoted scripture. It is interesting that he

does not develop a complex and logical argument proving the sovereignty of God. The reason for this is that the sovereignty of God does not lend itself to logical arguments and human understanding. It, like the doctrine of the trinity, is something to be accepted by faith since there is no way we as human beings can understand it.

Paul's argument starts out with a question, "**Is there unrighteousness with God?**". Romans is an interesting book since we find Paul anticipating the arguments and questions of his readers time and time again. Having just stated that God chose to bless Jacob and pass by Esau, Paul knew that someone would question the "fairness" of God. He anticipates the question and then gives an immediate reply before his proof, "**God Forbid**".

Before we look at Paul's proof, we need to consider the question that Paul anticipated. Probably a better rendering of the question would be "If God chooses whom to save, then how can I be held responsible for my rejection of God and my subsequent condemnation?". Implied in this question is the statement that God is unfair to choose some to salvation and condemn everyone else to an eternity in the lake of fire.

The best answer to the above question is to understand that the greater issue is not that God condemns, but that God saves. Too often we get hung up on the judgment side of God and fail to realize his mercy. In the final analysis, no human being deserves any good thing from God, salvation included. If we really want to get picky about it, God is more unfair in selecting some to salvation than he is to let the entire human race perish in the lake of fire. The biggest question is not "Why does God condemn?" but "Why does God save?".

Paul's answer to this question, as we have previously stated, is not a logical treatise but a reference to two passages in the Old Testament. The first quote in Romans 9:15 comes from Exodus 33:19 where we find Moses on Mount Sinai receiving the commandments a second time. He has just witnessed God's judgment on the nation of Israel for the golden calf incident and desires some proof that God is on his side. God graciously passes before Moses and allows him to see part of his glory and promises Moses that although his judgment fell on the sinful Israelites, he chose to show his mercy to Moses. Romans 9:16 makes it clear that God sovereignly chooses to whom he will show mercy and to whom he will show compassion.

The second quote is found in Romans 9:17 and is a paraphrase of Exodus 9:16. The word translated "raised up" comes from the Greek word *exageira* and means "to bring forward on the stage of history for a specific purpose". In other words, Pharaoh was sovereignly chosen by God for a specific purpose, namely to show his power to the whole world at that time. In fact, God's power was displayed to such a degree that forty years later Rahab referred to the power of God and the fear felt in the land of Canaan over what was done in Egypt (Joshua 2:9-11). However, we must remember that although God chose to use Pharaoh to glorify his judgments, Pharaoh rejected God as well. We never find an instance in scripture where a man accepts God on God's terms and God rejects that man. Whenever we find man rejecting God, we find God rejecting that man. Although God sovereignly chooses, man willfully rejects, and it is these two elements that determine the final destiny of all mankind.

Even after these two passages from the Old Testament, some readers would undoubtedly still insist that God is unfair in his divine sovereignty. Instead of arguing further, Paul makes an interesting statement, "Shut Up! Who are you to question God?" (verse 20). This is where our human comprehension stops and our faith steps in. We cannot reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility but both issues are taught in scripture. God is not unfair in his dealings with man and where he seems to be unfair, we need to stop and tell ourselves that although we cannot understand God, we know whatever he does is right. The prophet Habakkuk was in the same boat. The society he lived in was totally corrupt and godless. In his state of despair he turned to God only to find out that God's solution was to judge the nation of Israel with the Babylonians, a people far worse than Israel. This totally devastates the prophet since he cannot understand how God would use a worse people to judge Israel. However, in the end he states that even if everything falls apart, he will trust in the Lord and rejoice in the God of his salvation (Habakkuk 3:17-19). There comes a time when human understanding will always fall short of God's purposes and we need to rest in the fact that God is in control, even if we do not understand what he is doing or what will happen.

Paul completes this section on the sovereignty of God by referring to a familiar analogy, the potter and the clay. Just as the potter has complete power over the clay and can make a vessel to suit any purpose, even so God has complete control over men and can use them to serve his purposes. Further, just as the clay has no right to question the potter, even so we have no right to question God. God uses some men to show his mercy, and others to show his wrath. One of the reasons for the existence of sin is for God to show his wrath against it. God is in the business of displaying his attributes, and just as he displays his attribute of mercy in salvation, so he displays his attribute of judgment in condemnation.

Thus, the national rejection of Israel does not violate God's character since God sovereignly chooses some men to display his wrath and others to display his mercy. Because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah, God was able to show his mercy to the Gentiles for some 1900 years so far. Israel's rejection fit into the plan of God and is in perfect harmony with his divine character.

### 3. The Unbelief of Israel is Consistent with God's Plan - Romans 9:25-29

**9:25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 9:26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.**

Paul further clarifies the question of Israel's unbelief by showing that it is consistent with God's plan as revealed in the Old Testament. He does this by referring to four Old Testament references which point to a restoration of



Israel and the doctrine of the remnant. The doctrine of the remnant is interesting since it ties in closely with Paul's first argument in this section, namely that Israel's unbelief is consistent with God's promise. Throughout the Old Testament we always find that Israel as a whole lived in unbelief although there were brief times of revival. A look at the kings of Israel and Judah will show that all of the Israelite kings and a majority of the Judean kings were wicked and idolatrous. Christ summed it up well when he said in Matthew 23:29-31 that the Scribes and Pharisees decorate the tombs of the prophets not realizing that their fathers were the ones that killed them.

The first two Old Testament quotes are found in Romans 9:25 and 26. Romans 9:25 is a quote of Hosea 2:23 and Romans 9:26 is a quote from Hosea 1:10. Hosea was a prophet called by God to live his life as an object lesson for the nation of Israel. His wife, Gomer, turned out to be a prostitute and was eventually redeemed from the slave market by Hosea himself thus depicting in a graphic sense the prostitution of Israel from the true God. Hosea 2:23 is a promise of the future restoration of Israel to a place of blessing. Those who were not God's people will now be called God's people and those who were not loved will be loved by God. However, the reference in this passage does not refer to Jews only, but to Gentiles as well. In fact, if we look at verse 24 of Romans 9, we find that God has not only called Jews, but he has also called Gentiles. Peter refers to this same passage in 1 Peter 2:9-10 in which he is clearly referring to the Church made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

The third quote is found in Romans 9:27-28 and refers back to Isaiah 10:22-23. This quote reveals the doctrine of the remnant mentioned earlier. Paul uses the Old Testament to show that someday there will be a remnant that returns to God. The next logical conclusion is that for there to be a remnant, there must be an apostasy first. In other words, for there to be a restoration of a few Israelites to the true God, there must be a general apostasy experienced by the whole nation. The fourth quote supports this argument as well. Romans 9:29 is a reference to Isaiah 1:9 in which Israel is compared with Sodom and Gomorrha. A cursory reading of the Old Testament will show that Sodom and Gomorrha stood as indelible examples of God's judgment on apostasy and sin. When Isaiah refers to Israel as being as Sodom and Gomorrha, the only light is that there is a very small remnant.

Thus, Israel's unbelief does not violate the plan of God since it was foretold by the prophets that there would be a general apostasy of the nation in which only a small remnant would be saved.

#### **4. Israel's Unbelief is Consistent with God's Prerequisites - Romans 9:30-33**

**9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 9:31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**

The last point Paul makes regarding Israel's unbelief is that it is consistent with God's prerequisites for salvation. If we remember the argument of

Romans 4, we find that God has always designed salvation to be obtained by faith, never works. The Jewish nation, by following after works righteousness, missed the true righteousness of God.

The word translated “followed after” in verse 30 comes from the Greek word *dioko* which means to “pursue, earnestly run after” and hence to fervently try to attain. Paul is saying in this verse that the Gentiles, who did not try to attain righteousness as the Jews did, have in fact attained the righteousness of God by faith. That the Jew earnestly sought after righteousness needs no explanation. A Pharisee was inundated with rituals and rules for living that took years to learn. The great tragedy was that all of the efforts of the Jew did not matter to God. Verse 31 gives the flip side. The Jew, which spent most of his life learning and trying to keep the law, totally missed the righteousness of God. The reason is given in verse 32. The Jew tried to attain the righteousness of God by keeping the law and stumbled over Christ. Verse 33 is a quote from Isaiah 28:16 and 8:14. Paul skillfully merges these two verses showing that Christ became a stumblingstone to the Jew because they failed to see the inadequacy of their brand of righteousness. By solidly adhering to their righteousness attained by the law, they missed the righteousness of God attained by faith and thus missed God's salvation. Probably the best way to encapsulate these three verses is to quote Paul's personal feelings regarding the law and the righteousness of the law as found in Philippians 3:4-11:

**Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.**

Paul's greatest desire was to have the righteousness which is of God by faith, not the righteousness obtained from the law. God's righteousness is the only righteousness that will provide salvation and entrance into future glory.