

## INTRODUCTION

I heard about a pastor after he would preach a man would say to him, “Pastor, that was a warm message today.” or the man would say, “Pastor, that was a warm sermon” or he would sometimes say, “I appreciate those warm words.” One day the preacher caught him and said, “You’re always talking about the “warm” sermon and the “warm” message what do you mean by that word “warm”? The guy said, “Well, look it up. It means “not so hot!” When it comes to Roman, chapter 9, I’ll tell you, most preachers would just kind of skip over it. I used to be what I call a hopscotch preacher which means I would just skip over from text to text. I would never have dealt with a text like Romans, 9, because it is rather deep. But, a number of years ago, God laid upon my heart to be an expository Bible preacher where we study the Bible verse after verse, line upon line, precept upon precept. That way you are exposed to every portion of the Word of God. Today we are going to be looking at Romans, 9, that we started last week. Do you remember we looked at difficult statements like, God saying, “Jacob I loved; Esau I hated.”? Do you remember we talked about how he was referring really not to individuals, but to nations? We looked last week at the verses where God said, “I’ll have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will harden whom I will harden.” How God hardened the heart Pharaoh after Pharaoh had already started to harden his own heart. When some people read Romans, chapter 9, they just react negatively. They say, “I just can’t understand this.” or “I just can’t believe this!” Well, here in the final part of Romans, 9, the apostle, Paul, is addressing some of those objections.

Look in Romans, 9, verse 19 he already anticipates what his audience is going to say. So he says in verse 19, “One of you will say to me, “Well, then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will? But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? ‘Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “Why did you make me like this?” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” keep your Bibles open because as we read each section, then we will talk about it.

### **I. DON’T RESIST GOD’S PLAN—HE WANTS TO MOLD YOU!**

#### **1. God’s “shaping process” is often confusing**

The first point I think Paul is trying to make here is this. “Don’t resist God’s plan.” Make sure you don’t resist God’s plan for your life because he wants to mold you. He wants to fashion you to shape you. Somebody says, “Well, I feel pretty “moldy” today.” Well, I’m not talking about that. He’s trying to say like a potter shapes clay into something beautiful, God the Father is trying to shape you and me he’s trying to mold us into something. As he is in this process of molding us, we have to understand it’s hard for us to picture exactly where we are in the process. That’s why the first thing I want you to notice about this process is God’s shaping process is often confusing. It is often confusing to us.

Here’s a potter who takes a lump of clay. He plops that lump of clay down on a spinning wheel and he then takes his hands and he roughly fashions it into the shape he wants. He adds some water he throws in some sand until it gets to be the right consistency and then if it is not exactly what he wants, he just kind of balls it up into a roll again, plops it back down again, spins it and starts all over again. Then, he fashions it into something when he gets it just about right, he pops

it into a hot furnace. In the fire of that furnace it is hardened. I can imagine if clay could express feelings in that process, the clay would say to the potter, “What in the world are you doing to me? I’m getting dizzy spinning around like this. I’m drowning from this water. I’m choking from this sand and this heat is killing me!” But, the potter knows what he is doing. In this picture, we are the clay and God is the potter. Sometimes we get so confused about what he is doing in our lives but, just trust him he knows what he is trying to produce.

## **2. God can already see the finished product**

If any of you are looking for a new Bible, and most of you have more than you read, there is a wonderful paraphrase called “The Message” which is paraphrased by a guy by the name of Eugene Peterson. As you are shopping for Bibles you need to understand the difference between a version and a paraphrase. A version like the New International Version I use means a version was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. On the other hand a paraphrase is just some person who takes a version and changes it, paraphrases it into modern vernacular. I want you to listen to the way Eugene Peterson kind of paraphrases this passage of scripture we just read because at least it makes a little bit more sense to me. He writes, “Who in the world do you think you are to second guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question? Clay does not talk back to the fingers molding it saying, “Why did you shape me like this? Isn’t it obvious a potter has a perfect right to shape one lump of clay into a vase for holding beautiful flowers and another into a pot for cooking beans? If God needs one style of pottery especially designed to show his angry displeasure and another style carefully crafted to show his glorious goodness, isn’t that all right?” In other words God has a right to do what God does. The reason we sometimes don’t understand what he is doing is because he is still in the process which leads to the second thing about his process. God can already see the finished product. We can’t but in the mind of the potter he already has a picture of what he wants that lump of clay to become. Isn’t it good to know in the mind and in the heart of God he already has a picture of what you and I are going to become in Christ.

The problem is right now we are still under construction you might say. You look up here at me, David Dykes, and I’m not the finished product. I have a lot of flaws and imperfections. I mean, I’m a mess. But the good news is God’s not through with me yet and he’s not through with you yet. We are still in process. When you read Romans, 9, and you find out God is sovereign that he has a right to do what he wants to do and he chooses those to be in Christ before the foundation of the world, it starts enlarging your view and your picture of God. for many of us our problem is God is too small. For many of us we have stuffed our conception of God into some little nice, neat box that we can understand and we can figure out. We have God in a box and we carry him around every week, and we bring him out a little bit when we come to church on Sunday morning, then we stick him back in the box. Then, during the week if we need a special prayer answered, we will pull him out of the box again. Folks, if anything, Romans, 9, ought to just knock the walls off of your box and make you realize God cannot be contained by human understanding.

It’s like when I was a mischievous kid living in South Alabama it was a Christmas Eve night and my younger brother and I were shooting off firecrackers. I said to my brother, “I wonder what will happen if I put this cherry bomb in our mailbox? kids don’t try this at home I have since

learned it’s a federal offense but I did it. I stuck a cherry bomb in that mailbox and closed the lid and we stood back KA-BOOM !!! the back of that mailbox shot down the yard and the curved top part of that metal mailbox was straightened out and flew about twenty feet in the air and came flaming down in the middle of the street. My brother and I just stood there dumbfounded. We couldn’t believe we had done that! My dad who had heard the explosion came outside that evening he expressed his righteous indignation on his two boys. It left a lasting impression on me for quite a while. We had to buy a new mailbox and have it out there before the mailman arrived the next day and I promise you I have never again tried to put a cherry bomb in a mailbox. Do you know what the problem was? The mailbox could not contain the power of that explosion from that cherry bomb. It had nowhere to go so it just knocked the sides off of it.

When you read Romans 9. When you read Psalm 139, and many other passages of scripture, what it does it just explodes your concept of God. It knocks the walls off your tiny little box and you realize God cannot be contained. He is that great. So, instead of arguing with God resisting against God saying, “God, are you sure you know what you are doing?” you learn to say, “Well, all right. He is trying to shape me and mold me so I’m not going to resist, I’m going to cooperate with him.” That’s the first thing Paul is saying here.

## **II. DON’T IGNORE GOD’S WRATH—HE WANTS TO WARN YOU**

Let’s notice the second thing he is saying: “Don’t ignore God’s wrath because he wants to warn you.” Let’s read verses 22-29. Notice how many times he uses the phrase, “the wrath of God” or “God’s wrath.”

Romans 9:22-23. “What if God, choosing to show his WRATH and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his WRATH—prepared for destruction? 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.”

Paul is basically saying, “So what if God decided he’s going to show his wrath against sin. That only makes our mercy that much more valuable.” Then he begins to quote the Old Testament. The apostle, Paul, had quite a grasp of the Old Testament. He’s going to quote Hosea and then Isaiah. Look at verse 25. “As God 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.” Talking about the Gentiles “And, it will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ They will be called ‘sons of the living God.’” Now, all that means is we who were not originally Jews, not part of God’s chosen people, now can call ourselves the children of God. Verse 27 “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, Only the remnant will be saved.” Now, we’ll talk a lot more about that in Romans, 11 “For the Lord will carry out His sentence on earth with speed and finality.”

Notice it says God is going to carry out a sentence on earth. Verse 19 “It is just as Isaiah said previously: ‘Unless the Lord Almighty Had left us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, (file that away) We would have been like Gomorrah.’” in this section, Paul is talking about God’s wrath. I know a lot of people don’t like to talk about God’s wrath. They’d rather

talk about God’s love, God’s grace, God’s mercy or the peace of God that passes all understanding, but don’t talk to me about his wrath. Well, it is in the Bible. The God of love is also a God of wrath and you can’t ignore it. You have to understand some things about God’s wrath. Notice a couple of things here.

## **1. God’s wrath is mixed with His mercy**

God’s wrath is mixed with his mercy. That’s very important! Right now, currently, his wrath is mixed with his mercy. Let’s just say I had a bottle here of pure 100% wrath. Let’s say I had over here a bottle of pure 100% mercy. Right now God has mixed the two and right now his wrath is diluted and tempered by his love and mercy. That’s why he says up there in the verse we read. “He has demonstrated patience toward these objects, these vessels, of wrath. Look at 2 Peter 3:9. “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” some people stumble all over Romans, chapter 9, because they think it says God has chosen some people to be saved and he has chosen some people to be lost. The Bible never says that. Yes, the Bible says “He chose those of us who were going to choose Jesus Christ, but he never chose or selected anybody to be lost.” In fact, if you want to look at 2 Peter 3:9 again, it says, “God’s desire, his will is for everybody to be saved, for everyone to repent.” That doesn’t mean everyone will, but that’s what God wants. The reason he is showing patience right now to mankind is because he wants people to have time to repent and to be saved.

Some of you have been reading some of these books by Tim LaHaye called The Left Behind series. They are very, very popular right now and I have read one of them. They are, I think, pretty good books. You have to remember though that these are fiction novels not the word of God. Enjoy them, but also learn something about the Bible. I do agree with Tim LaHaye and others in the belief that the next thing that’s going to happen is Jesus Christ is going to come and rapture the church. All of us who are born again are going to be taken out of this place, and then there will ensue on planet earth a seven year period the Bible calls the Time of Tribulation and it is going to be terrible. What I am trying to say is that will be a time when God’s wrath will be poured out and it will be 100% pure wrath. It won’t be mixed with mercy. If you want to know what it is going to be like, you don’t have to read those novels, you can go home and read Revelation, chapter 6 through Revelation, chapter 18, about what’s going to happen here during the Time of Tribulation. It says in Revelation, 16:1, and it’s symbolized this way, “There were seven bowls that were pure 100% wrath that during the Time of Tribulation are going to be poured out.” God’s wrath is going to be poured out undiluted on planet earth. Ladies and gentleman, I thank God I am not going to be here for that! You ought to thank God you are not going to be here for that!. If you are here today and you are not born again, you’d better come to Jesus as quickly as you can because you don’t want to be here during that time. The good thing about some of those books is I hope it is causing people to get saved. I hope it is causing Christians to be concerned about their lost family members and to tell them about Christ because that’s when his wrath will be unmixed.

## **2. God’s wrath has been revealed throughout history**

God’s wrath has been revealed throughout history. It has been demonstrated or revealed throughout history. We have seen many examples of his wrath mixed with mercy and grace. Romans 1:18 says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.” It’s being revealed right now. Why does God show us some demonstrations of his wrath in history? To warn us. To teach us that one day God is going to judge sin.

Can you think of some examples when God poured out his wrath on planet earth? What about Noah and the Ark? Do you remember when man was so wicked God sent a flood that destroyed all the people on the earth, but it was mixed with his mercy he saved Noah and his family? What’s another example of God’s wrath? The example Paul uses from Isaiah Sodom and Gomorrah. Not long ago we were down at the tip of the Dead Sea that is the old Biblical site of Sodom and Gomorrah, and I am here to tell you there is nothing there but a bunch of salty ruins. What did God do there? Well, because there was so much evil and wickedness in those cities the Bible says God sent down fire from heaven and destroyed those wicked cities. But, his wrath was mixed with mercy and he let Lot and his family leave without being killed. Do you see what I’m saying? His wrath is mixed with mercy. I could give you lots of examples of God’s wrath. What about when Moses was leading the children of Israel toward the Promised Land there was a man by the name of Korah who rebelled against Moses and rebelled against God. God became so angry the Bible says the ground opened up and a bunch of them fell in there and died but he didn’t do it to all those people who were rebellious. So, what I’m saying is his wrath is mixed with mercy.

The year was 586 B.C. Jerusalem stood and was a beautiful city with Solomon’s golden temple standing there shining in the sun and they thought Jerusalem and this temple would never be destroyed. Well, think again! God sent his wrath on the city of Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire and they destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, but his wrath was mixed because a remnant was left and returned years later. Those of you who like Bible history, Paul wrote this letter we believe about 62 to 65 A.D. just about 3 or 4 years before 70 A.D. when for the last time Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Legions and the Jews were killed and scattered throughout the planet. For seventeen hundred years they did not even think about going back to the Holy Land. Throughout history God has given example, example, example, do you know what he is saying to us? He is saying, “Pay attention, class! I’m trying to teach you something. I judge sin.”

Have you ever been driving down the highway and you are going a little bit over the speed limit when you see a state trooper there with the lights flashing giving somebody a ticket what do you usually do? Well, most of you will slow down, won’t you? That serves as a warning. You speed, you get caught, you get a ticket. God has given us all these warnings through the years to say, “I judge sin!” When it comes to America there are some people who are saying, “Well, God’s judgement is upon America.” The question I have is I don’t know why God is withholding his judgement on America as morally wicked and impure as we have become.

The other day I was talking to a man who was a secular humanist. He would believe there is a God somewhere, but he certainly wouldn’t believe the Bible or in Jesus or anything like that. We were discussing origins and he was talking about how he believed in the theory of evolution. I

said “Well, I don’t believe the theory of evolution.” I said, “I don’t believe that man came from monkeys. I think that is an insult to monkeys!” If the theory of evolution were true, it would mean man would have been evolving into a better creature throughout all these generations. Yes, we are getting smarter in technology and yes, we are getting bigger and faster physically, but we are still morally bankrupt. There’s a problem at the heart of the matter and it’s the human heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says “the heart is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked, who can know it?” I really do think it is an insult to monkeys to say we came from monkeys because man does things worse than monkeys would ever think about doing.

Look at what happened in Uganda just a few days ago. These American tourists were watching these peace-loving gorillas in their natural habitat and here came these rebel soldiers. They attacked this group, tortured, raped, murdered some of those people I have never heard of gorillas or monkeys acting like that. the problem is man is a sinful creature. We are not born morally neutral and because of environment or education go wrong or go good. We are all born sinners by nature and by choice. It is only by the grace and forgiveness and mercy of God any of us are forgiven and saved because we are all sinners. Man is not getting any better. Three thousand years ago they used to take newborn babies and throw them in the fire and we look back at that and say, “That’s pagan worship!” Today we call it abortion as a choice. What’s the difference? Man is no better. That’s what this verse is saying. God is going to judge sin. You had better look out for the examples of his wrath. Can I just ask you today before I leave this point pardon me for belaboring it Have you ever at one time in your life stood before a holy God and expressed even a sliver of fear at his judgement and wrath against sin? If you haven’t, you probably have never been saved.

We sing that song “Amazing Grace” we don’t even think about the words. That verse says, “For grace that taught my heart to ” what? “fear” and then we just keep on singing and don’t even think about it. “Grace that taught my heart to fear!” fear what? I say, fear the judgement and wrath of God ! Then you keep singing, “And grace, my fears relieved How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.” Do you know why the Bible even talks about the wrath of God against sin? Because it makes the mercy and grace of God that much more beautiful in contrast. I have told you before when you go to the jewelers they take a black piece of velvet to put the diamonds on because the beauty of the diamonds is enhanced by the darkness of the cloth behind it. The grace and mercy of God is enhanced by the backdrop of the wrath and judgement of God.

### **III. DON’T STUMBLE OVER GOD’S STONE—HE WANTS TO SAVE YOU**

Here’s the third thing Paul is saying in this sticky, deep kind of passage. He is saying, “Don’t stumble over God’s stone. Don’t stumble over God’s stepping stone because he wants to save you.” Let’s read verse 30-33. He says, “What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they” that is the Jews “pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.” now, that’s next Sunday’s message in Romans, 10. “They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone’. As it is written:” and here’s a quotation from Isaiah, 8. God says, “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble And a rock that makes them fall, And the one who trusts in him.” why didn’t he say trusts in it? Isn’t he talking about a rock? Isn’t he

talking about a stone impersonal. Why does he say, “who trusts in him”? because he’s not talking about a stone, he’s talking about a person Jesus “And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” What that means is the New Testament identifies Jesus as being this stone which the builders rejected the cornerstone the living stone. In the pathway of every single individual God has placed a stone. You can’t avoid it. You can’t ignore it. It’s there. It’s in your pathway. You have to deal with it! You will either stumble over it, or you’ll stand on it in faith. That’s where your choice comes in.

## 1. Religious people often stumble over Jesus

I want you to notice a couple of things about this stone who is Jesus. Religious people often stumble over Jesus. Purely religious people I’m not talking about born again people but just religious people often stumble over Jesus. They like to talk about God. They like to talk about the Good Lord and they like to talk about religion, but they don’t like to talk much about Jesus. Not long after I came to Tyler, I went to a meeting and somebody said, “Now, if you pray, you be sure you don’t pray in the name of Jesus.” I just didn’t go back. That’s all right. If there is no Jesus, there is no faith. If there is no Jesus, there is no heaven. If there is no Jesus, there is no hope. You say, “Now, pastor. That’s mighty narrow-minded.” Well, you know what you are doing? You are tripping over it. You are stumbling over it. A lot of people do.

Let’s look at the words of Jesus himself in John 14,6. Jesus answered, “I am the way, and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.” I’m here to tell you, Jesus is not the best way to heaven he is the only way to heaven. Jesus is not one of the ways to heaven, he is THE way to heaven. If he is not he is a fake and a fraud and a liar! He himself said, “I am the only way to the Father.” Look at Acts 4:12. “Salvation is found in no other else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Do you know the politically correct idea in America today? Well, everybody has their own little pathway to God. You know these folks have their pathway those folks have their pathway you Christians have your pathway, and we’re all going to end up at the same place. The only thing wrong with that is that is not what Jesus said! That makes sense, humanly speaking it even makes sense logically, but it is not what Jesus said. People say, “Well, pastor. That is so bigoted on your part. That is so narrow-minded.” Well, I’m just going to stand with Jesus and what he said. You can call me bigoted and narrow-minded if you want to, but I’m going to stand on the rock of the Lord Jesus and what he said. It’s not through Buddhism. It’s not through Confucianism. It’s not through Judaism or any of those other “isms” that are going to become “wasms” if you know what I mean. It’s not through any of those things. It’s through Jesus and Jesus alone. Religious people don’t like that. They stumble over it. But, is that any surprise? That’s exactly what the Bible says they did. “They stumbled over God’s stepping stone.”

## 2. Standing on (trusting) Jesus is the *only* safe place to avoid God’s judgement against sin

Here’s the point of what I think the apostle, Paul was trying to communicate. Standing on which means trusting Jesus is the only safe place to avoid God’s judgement against sin. Standing on the rock of Jesus is the only safe place to stand to avoid God’s judgement. Here’s the picture. I told you a while ago God is going to judge sin. We have seen examples of his wrath. Do you remember the examples we talked about? Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem I have not

even mentioned the number one greatest example of God pouring out his judgement and wrath against sin. You may be surprised. Do you know the very best example is at the cross of Jesus Christ because Listen to me! if a holy God would have ever been tempted to go a little light on sin and be a little lenient, and hold back a little bit against sin, it would have been when his precious, pure, only son became sin But, he didn’t It says in the book of Isaiah, “It pleased the Lord to crush him.” God has laid on him the iniquities of us all. You’ll either stand on the rock of the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ or you’ll stumble over it, and then you will experience God’s judgement against sin.

To me, that’s a pretty easy choice. I’m going to stand right here on the rock of Jesus. On this rock I stand, and it is the only place that is safe from the judgement of God. You know, some of you are looking at me right now like you have a cherry bomb in your mailbox. I just don’t understand that.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you remember when you could take your kids to Disney movies? I remember I must have been just about a first grader when my family loaded up our ‘55 Chevrolet and drove to the Drive-In movie theater in Dothan, Alabama to see that great Disney classic, “Ole Yeller”. “Ole Yeller.” Do you remember that movie? Sure you do. Don’t act like you haven’t seen that movie. The daddy, played by Fess Parker, has to go off for a cattle drive and leave the mother and the two sons there alone. They get an old, mangy, yellow dog and he comes back in A bear attacks and ole yeller chases the bear away a mountain lion attacks and ole yeller chases the mountain lion away. I’m just watching this movie and enjoying it (as a little bitty kid) and suddenly toward the end of the movie the boy takes a gun BAM and shoots ole yeller. I just busted out crying. I thought it was all right because everybody else in my family was crying. I’ll tell you one thing if you don’t cry at “Ole Yeller”, you are a heartless Baptist! Here’s the point I am trying to make. I was so young I didn’t know why he killed the dog. I just thought he killed it, so I went home just perplexed. I can remember saying to my daddy I said, “Daddy, why did he shoot the dog?” My daddy said, “Well, son, it’s because the dog had rabies.” I said, “Oh!” And I had absolutely no idea what rabies was I still didn’t know I was clueless. I said, “Why did he shoot the dog?” I thought that was the strangest movie to have such a good dog and then kill him in the end. It was probably months, maybe even years later, I was just learning like everybody does as you grow older, about rabies Suddenly, I was reading something or heard something about rabies being a disease that affects dogs if a dog has rabies and it bites somebody that person could die BOOM A light came on in my mind and I said, “Now I know why they had to shoot ole Yeller. It makes sense now.” Do you know the problem with most of us as it relates to a God who is so much infinitely smarter than we are? We’re still in that stage where we don’t really understand why he is doing the things he does and the way he does things. But one of these days, folks BOOM when we see Jesus the light will come on and we will say, “Now I know why he did what he did.”

So, until then all I want to say to you is “Don’t try to figure him out. Just trust him and love him. God is a good God. What he does is right, and he has a right to do what he does!

## OUTLINE

### I. DON'T RESIST GOD'S PLAN—HE WANTS TO MOLD YOU! (19-21)

1. God's "shaping process" is often confusing
2. God can already see the finished product

### II. DON'T IGNORE GOD'S WRATH—HE WANTS TO WARN YOU (22-29)

God's wrath:

1. Is mixed with His mercy

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. His is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. *2 Peter 3:9*

2. Has been revealed throughout history

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. *Romans 1:18*

### III. DON'T STUMBLE OVER GOD'S STONE—HE WANTS TO SAVE YOU! (30-33)

1. Religious people often stumble over Jesus

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." *Acts 4:12*

2. Standing on (trusting) Jesus is the **only** safe place to avoid God's judgement against sin



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes