

# Romans 09 - Israel in the Past: Elected

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## V. Sovereignty (9:1—11:36)

The general theme of the Book of Romans is the revelation of the righteousness of God (Rom 1:17). All men, both Jews and Gentiles, stand in the need of divine righteousness. All are morally guilty before a just God because all are “under sin”—under its penalty, power, and effects (3:9-19). All manifest their enslavement to sin by their rejection of truth that God has revealed in the created world, in the image of God within man, and in the Holy Scriptures (1:18—3:20).

All men, both Jews and Gentiles, cannot do anything to merit the righteousness of God. Rather, all must admit their moral guilt and condemned state before God. When that confession occurs, then sinners are in a position to hear the good news—the gospel wherein Christ satisfied the righteous demands of God for sin through His redemptive death on the Cross and His victorious resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:16; 3:21-31). Any person, either Jew or Gentile, can receive the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ. After a believing sinner has received the righteousness of God, he can be justified, or declared to be righteous by God (Rom 3:21—5:21).

In Rom 1-8, Paul argued that believing sinners can trust God through Jesus Christ for deliverance from the penalty of sin (justification), for victory over the power of our sinful disposition (sanctification), and for ultimate liberation from the effects of sin demonstrated in our mortal, corruptible bodies (glorification). At the end of Rom 8, as Paul concludes the theology of God’s righteousness, he points out that in light of all that God has done for believers in justification, sanctification and glorification, there is absolutely nothing that can separate believers from the love of God. Nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing below the earth, nothing outside of them, nothing inside of them, not even they themselves can separate believers from the love of God.

One would think that, having stated all this, that Paul would move directly from speaking about the *theology* of God’s righteousness into talking about the *practice* of God’s righteousness. However, before he gets to that he spends three chapters dealing with God’s righteousness *in His relationship to Israel*. The reason for this is to answer an obvious objection: After concluding that in light of all that God had done, all His promises, there is nothing that can separate believers from the love of God, one might ask, “Didn’t Israel have promises from God, including national salvation and worldwide restoration? Yet, the vast majority of Israel is in a state of unbelief. It does not seem that God’s promises to Israel have been kept. And if God’s promises haven’t been kept, how can anyone believe Rom 8?” To answer such a question, Paul must deal with the question of God’s righteousness in His relationship to Israel.

***In Rom 9-11, Paul relates the redemptive program of God for believers to His covenant promises to the nation of Israel. The main issue is this question: Did God break His promises to Israel? If so, how can we be confident in Christ’s promises to***

***us today? Can there be an eventual loss of salvation through our personal moral failure and unbelief? Has Israel somehow lost its promised future?***

God will complete every unconditional promise to the real Israel because Israel is "beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom 11:28). ***Eternal security for the believer is inseparably connected to the assured future of Israel.*** To deny one truth is to deny the other, to affirm one means to affirm the other. ***The issue behind all of this is a demonstration by God to the world that He keeps His promises!***

Israel in the past: Elected (Rom 9)

- Jer 31:35-37 - Israel will remain as long as the sun, moon and stars remain
- Ezek 36:22 - God will regenerate Israel, not for their sakes, but because of His covenant
- Ex 2:24 - God liberated Israel out of Egypt, not because they deserved it, but because God remembered His covenant

Paul, a learned OT scholar and former Pharisee, knew the OT backward and forward. He anticipates a question from his readers after the promises he communicated in Rom 8...

- How can we trust God's promises for our eternal security in Rom 8 if God broke His promises to Israel in Gen 15; Deut 29; 2 Sam and Jer 31, Rom 8 means very little in terms of my security?
- How can we trust that God will keep these precious promises to us if He's broken His promises to Israel?
- If God can break His promises to the Jews, what is stopping Him from breaking His promises to the church?

(A) Israel's present rejection causes Paul grief (9:1-5)

(a) Statement of Paul's sorrow (9:1-2)

**1** I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

**1** I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,

**1** I am telling the truth because I belong to the Messiah—I am not lying, and my conscience confirms it by means of the Holy Spirit.

**1** I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

- Paul wasn't just having a bad day when he wrote this passage...he had constant sorrow and grief in his heart because of Israel's unbelief

— Paul had a burden so strong that it was all that he can think about

— The burden was given to him by the Holy Spirit

To affirm the authenticity of his concern, Paul gave three exclamations for his truthfulness:

1. "I am telling the truth in Christ"
2. "I am not lying"
3. "my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit."

Paul knew that his readers would have difficulty in accepting his spiritual concern for Israel. He used the best language possible to manifest that his inner feelings were completely free of deceit and falsehood.

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

2 I have deep sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual [unceasing] sorrow in my heart.

- Not just sorrow, but "great" sorrow; not just grief, but "unceasing" grief coming from inside Paul, because the Holy Spirit put it there

— Paul is pouring his heart out—he is talking passionately. This is not an academic or intellectual issue; he is totally involved with this issue.

— Paul's love for his people (the Jews) was love for those who hated him. Before his conversion, Paul (Saul) led his people (Jews) in persecuting Christians as enemies of their faith (Acts 9:1-2,14-16). Now, he was the enemy of his fellow Jews (Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 11:24,26).

*No man will ever even begin to try to save men unless he first loves them.* [Barclay]

(b) Proof of Paul's sorrow (9:3)

3 For **I could wish** that I myself were **accursed**, *separated* from Christ for the sake of **my countrymen**, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

3 for I could wish that I myself were condemned and cut off from the Messiah for the sake of my brothers, my own people,

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

- Paul, how bad is this sorrow and grief that you're feeling?

— Here's how bad it is, Paul says: If me being cut off from Christ and spending eternity in hell would somehow bring salvation to the Jews, I'm down with that. If that transaction could be worked out, I'll pay the price.

- "...I could wish" - imperfect tense (continuous action in past time), optative mood (rarely used in NT)
- The optative mood of a verb is expressive of a wish that implies a contrary-to-fact subjunctive; something you wish was true but know is impossible
- The grammar implies it is an absolute impossibility; thus, another absolute testimony to eternal security!
- His wish was hypothetical, but his selfless love was real. He was willing not simply to die for the sake of his people, but to be "cut off from Christ," to lose his salvation eternally, if that could bring about their belief.
- Paul's statement expresses emotion, not theology
- This occurs only one other time in the Word of God (Ex 32:30-32)
- If this argument had validity *before* the Davidic Covenant, and the hundreds of other affirmations throughout the prophets, how "much more" *now*!
- Ezek 36:19-(22!)25... *Despite their apostasy...*
- "...accursed" - *anathema*, eternal damnation (Cf. Gal 1:8); Paul would welcome eternal damnation if it meant that Israel would come to Christ
- "...my countrymen" - or, "brethren"; typically used by biblical authors to denote fellow believers (their audience), however here Paul uses the word to describe fellow Jews (Cf. Acts 13:15)
- Paul was as Jewish as they come, so his countrymen are the Jewish people (Phil 3:5)

### **Dual Covenant Theology**

There is a false teaching out there that believes that Jews are saved without Jesus, through obedience to their own covenant and the Gentile is saved through His relationship to Jesus Christ.

The mindset behind this is to not contribute to anti-semitism. The Jews have been through so much throughout their history that we don't want to bother them about the condition of hell, just leave them alone. However, there could not be a more anti-semitic thing than to not preach the gospel to the Jews, and leave them alone to believe that obedience to their covenant is pleasing to God.

Paul never taught Dual Covenant Theology, as is clear from 9:1-3. Paul's statement that he would rather be cut off from Christ if it meant that the Jews would be saved would be a ludicrous statement if Dual Covenant Theology was true.

If the Bible is clear on anything, it's clear that faith alone in Christ alone is the only path to salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5; Gal 2:21). The moment we believe or espouse a doctrine where Christ is just an option is the moment we are saying that everything that Christ went through on the cross was in vain. It trivializes what Christ has done.

(c) Reason for Paul's sorrow (9:4-5)

4 who are **Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and daughters, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the *temple* service, and the promises;**

4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises,

4 who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, and the promises.

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;

- The reason for Paul's sorrow is that the Jews have been blessed and blessed and blessed by God like no other nation in the history of the world

— The have privilege after privilege after privilege, yet Paul says that they are in spiritual blindness when it comes to Christ, the One to whom all of these promises and blessings pointed

— It's sometimes true that the people with the greatest blessings cannot see the simplest of truths

- "...Israelites, to whom belongs" - present tense; these privileges and covenants belonged to Israel on the day Paul wrote this, and still do today; no replacement theology here

— "Israelites" - connotes the chosen people of God, whereas "Jews" simply distinguishes them from Gentiles

- "...adoption" - God graciously adopted Israel, as He had Christians (Cf. 8:15; Ex 4:22; Deut 14:1-2); Israel is the only nation called "God's son" (Ex 4:22)

— Adoption is the right starting point, as it places the source of salvation in God's grace

— Normally, adoption refers to a believer's new status before God, as His children (Cf. 8:15,23; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). Here, it refers to God's choice (election) of His people through whom He promised to bring salvation to the world (Ex 4:22; Deut 8:5; Hosea 11:1).

- "...the glory" - *shekinah*, the visible symbol of the sovereign God's authority and power as a shining presence in the OT:

— The cloud and pillar of fire that guided Israel at the Exodus (Ex 13:21-22; 40:36-38). It descended on Mount Sinai when God gave the Law (Ex 24:16-17).

— It filled the newly constructed tabernacle (Ex 40:34-35) and later temple (2 Chr 5:13-6:2), and later settled above the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:2)

— At the time of Israel's exile to Babylon, the glory departed and returned to heaven in judgment of the people's sins (Ezek 10-11)

— We have God's glory with us today in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 2:11; 2 Cor 3:18; Heb 1:2-3). The Shekinah will once again inhabit the Millennial Temple (Ezek 43:4) by way of the eastern gate.

- "...the covenants" - the Abrahamic Covenant, which promised land, seed and blessing. These promises are further detailed in the sub-covenants: land (Land Covenant, Deut 29-30), seed (Davidic Covenant, 2 Sam 7:11b-17; 1 Chr 17:10b-15), and blessing (New Covenant, Jer 31:31-34).

— God initiated and established His special relationship to His people through covenants. He promised to be His people's God, never to abandon them, and to send a Savior for the world to reign forever on David's Throne.

— There are 8 Covenants in Scripture, five of which were made exclusively with Israel (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, New; Cf. Eph 2:11-12); the others were made with mankind in general. Four of the five are unconditional (only Mosaic is conditional), and are the specific covenants that Paul is referring to here (Cf. Eph 2:12).

— See [8 Covenants of the Bible](#) for details about each of the Covenants.

- "...the Law" - the Mosaic Law, starting with the 10 commandments and including the other 603 commandments that further detail and amplify them

— God gave the Israelites His Law to govern their political, social, and religious life, and to guarantee His blessing if they obeyed

— The Law does not guarantee us salvation, but rather it shows us the need for salvation by revealing to us the holy character of God

— When we read and understand the Law, we see the character of God on display: what does He approve of, what does He disapprove of, how does God think, what things are pleasing to God, what things are displeasing to God.

— Israel is the only nation in this history of mankind to receive a set of Laws directly from God (Ps 147:19-20)

- "...*temple* service" - in the OT, God lived in the temple, and before that, in the "mobile temple," the Tabernacle (in the NT, He lives inside every believer)

— Sinful people could approach the holy God only by means of a blood sacrifice. An innocent substitute died in the guilty sinner's place. Jesus brought to completion and fulfilled these sacrifices.

— It also enabled Israel to have fellowship with God; this same fellowship is available to Christians through the high priestly work of Christ

- "...the promises" - described in Gen 12:1-3; God gave Abraham 8 unilateral, unconditional promises:

1. Land: "go to the land that I will show you"
2. Great nation: "I will make you a great nation"
3. Personal blessing: "I will bless you"
4. Great name: "I will make your name great"
5. Blessing to others: "you shall be a blessing"
6. Blessing on friends: "I will bless those who bless you"

7. Curses on enemies: "I will curse those who curse you"

8. Channel of blessing to the world: "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"

- What was God's purpose for choosing the Jews? To give to Israel privileges and guarantees that God gave to no other nation, not for your own sake, but because God wanted to use Israel as a vehicle/channel/vessel of blessing to the entire world (Gen 12:3).

5 whose are **thefathers**, and **from whom is the Christ** according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

5 To the Israelis belong the patriarchs, and from them, the Messiah descended, who is God over all, the one who is forever blessed. Amen.

5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is [God] over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

- "...the fathers" - the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 3:6)

— God personally revealed Himself to them, and delivered, guided, and blessed Israel through them. He gave the patriarchs promises before Israel was a nation. Jesus ultimately fulfills all God's promises (2 Cor 1:20).

- "...from whom is the Christ" - last but certainly not least, the Jews gave us Jesus Christ

— Despite all of the blessings God gave to Israel, they completely whiffed on the last blessing, not recognizing that Jesus Christ is their Messiah

Is 42:6: "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,

Is 49:6: He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

### **Israel's Three Blessings to the World**

1. Scripture (Rom 3:2)
2. Savior (John 4:22)
3. Kingdom (Is 2:2-3)

### **Israel's Eight Blessings (Rom 9:4-5)**

1. Adoption
2. Glory



3. Covenants
4. Law
5. Temple
6. Promises
7. Fathers
8. Christ

Paul does not explicitly compare Israel's blessings/advantages to ours today. His point was simply that God had blessed Israel greatly. Obviously, even though God had blessed the Israelites greatly, their blessings did not exceed those of Christians today. The Book of Hebrews argues that God's blessings of Christians under the New Covenant surpass His blessings of Israelites under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant.

(B) God's present rejection of Israel is consistent with God's promises because God has always worked through individuals within the nation (9:6-13)

(a) Proposition stated (9:6)

**6 But *it is not as though the word of God has failed*. For **they** are **not all Israel who are descended from Israel**;**

**6** But *it is not as though the word of God has failed*. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

**6** Now it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all Israelis truly belong to Israel,

**6** Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

- Only a small percentage of Jews in the 1st century came to Christ...Paul was part of that group, the 12 apostles, and much of the early church (Acts 2-9)

— This fact was disturbing to many people...why did it seem like the promises of God lapsed, and that only a small number of Jews became believers?

— What Paul begins to explain in v6-13 is that you shouldn't panic about that...that God's Word has not failed. In fact, Paul will argue, if you know your OT, this is how God has always worked through a small remnant of believers. Paul says that God is doing the same thing today.

— So what has happened in term of Israel's promises is not out of character with God and not outside of the promises God has made

- "...*it is not as though the word of God has failed*" - it appeared to the Romans that it had failed, but it had not failed; this phrase is the thesis of Paul's argument from here through Rom 11

- Not *all* born as Israelites were among God's faithful covenant people. Therefore, God's Word has not failed.
- God always keeps His Word. No promise of God has ever, or will ever, fail. He is omniscient and omnipotent, sovereign, and no one can frustrate His divine purpose (Is 46:9-11).
- "word of God" - God's revelation of His plans for Israel in the OT:
- God revealed that He had chosen Israel to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6)
- The Israelites were to function as priests in the world by bringing the nations to God (Cf. Is 42:6). They were to do this by demonstrating through their life in the Holy Land how glorious it can be to live under the government of God.
- Israel had failed to carry out God's purpose thus far, and consequently had suffered His discipline
- It looked as though "the word" that God had spoken concerning Israel's purpose had "failed"
- In the following chapters, Paul proceeded to show that God would ultimately accomplish His purpose for Israel
- "failed" - *ekpeptoken*, means "to fall out," "to fall from" or "gone off its course"; it is used to speak of withering flowers (James 1:11; 1 Peter 1:24) and of falling away from a straight course (Acts 27:17,26,29).
- The point is that the Word of God has not fallen off its straight course, which is the plan and purpose of God. It has not suddenly been frustrated by Israel's rejection. In fact, Israel's rejection was very much part of God's divine program and plan.
- The problem is not that the Word of God or His promises have failed, or "taken none effect"
- "...they" - it's important to note, to understand this verse properly, that "they" does not distinguish between Israel and the Church or between Jews and Gentiles. Rather, Paul is distinguishing between Jews who believe (the Remnant) and Jews who do not believe (the non-Remnant).
- "...not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel" - God will fulfill His covenant one day, not through the nation as a whole, but through a tiny remnant of believers, as is His custom
- Even through all physical descendants of Israel (Jacob) constitute the nation of Israel, as Scripture speaks of Israel, God spoke of Israel in a more restricted sense: *saved* Israelites
- Paul previously pointed out this distinction between the outward Jew and the inward Jew (2:28-29; Cf. Matt 3:9)
- Paul now delves into the distinction between physical and spiritual Israel
- "not all Israel" - refers to the believing Jewish Remnant; note that Paul doesn't say not *any* are Israel, he says not *all* are Israel

- The majority of Jews are in unbelief and only a tiny minority accept Christ as their Messiah, but don't let that scare you or bother you into thinking that God's Word (promises) have somehow failed because this is how God has always worked
- Zech 13:8-9 says that during the Tribulation, two-thirds of Jews will be killed and one-third will be preserved. That one-third of the nation is the "remnant" who will come to Christ and be saved. It is through that remnant that God will fulfill His covenantal promises.
- God is unimpressed with genealogical lineage...the fact that someone is a Jew, a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is unimpressive to God. God cares about our spiritual lineage (Cf. Matt 3:9; Rev 2:9; 3:9).
- "*descended from Israel*" - refers to those who can trace their family ancestry to the patriarchs; the entire nation, the whole natural seed of Abraham. This is Israel in a general sense, including those who believe (Remnant) and those who do not (non-Remnant).
- Mere ethnic identification with Abraham is not a sufficient basis to receive all of the covenant promises given to Abraham
- Christ affirmed that His critics were the descendants of Abraham, but He denied that they were the real children of Abraham (John 8:37-39). In fact, He asserted that their father was the devil (John 8:44).
- Covenant theologians or others who believe in Replacement Theology frequently appeal to this verse for support. They take the first "Israel" in this verse as "old Israel" and the second Israel as "new Israel," the Church.
- Saved Gentiles are also Abraham's seed, but they are not in view here. Paul was considering only two kinds of Israelites: natural (ethnic) Israelites, saved and unsaved, and spiritual Israelites, saved natural Israelites.
- Israel is mentioned 70x [KJV] in 68 verses in the NT and *always* refers to the Nation, *never* the Church. The term also never includes Gentiles within its meaning. Paul's usage of "Israel" in Rom 9-11 is consistent with every other usage of the word in the NT.

What Paul is saying is that there are two Israels: Israel the Whole, which includes all physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and secondly, within the nation of Israel, there is the "Israel of God," (Gal 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5) the believing Israel, the true Israel. There is one Israel which comprises the entire nation, and within the whole of physical Israel there is a spiritual Israel. The contrast is between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. The "Israel of God," believing Israel, is never stated in Scripture to be the Church; it is always those Jews, within the nation, who believe.

Paul is not distinguishing a spiritual Israel (i.e. the Church) from fleshly Israel, but to state that the promises made to Israel might be fulfilled even if some of his descendants were shut out from them. What he states is that not all the physical descendants of Jacob are necessarily inheritors of the Divine promises.

The description of Jews by Paul in Rom 2:28-29, along with Christ in John 8:37-44, are consistent with the history of Israel. Should the wicked, idolatrous kings of Israel and Judah be recognized as the true Israel, who would receive both the spiritual and materialistic blessings of the covenant promises? Certainly not! In the OT era, there was a vast difference between the true Jewish believer and the apostate, idolatrous Jewish unbeliever.

After stating there are two Israels, and that there is a distinction between Israel as a whole and Israel as the believing Remnant, Paul now uses two illustrations below (v7-13), of Ishmael and Isaac, and Jacob and Esau.

(b) OT proof (9:7-13)

(i) Isaac chosen over Ishmael (9:7-9)

7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE NAMED."

7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named."

7 and not all of Abraham's descendants are his true descendants. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that descendants will be named for you."

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

- Paul will now give OT examples to show that God primarily worked through believers in the nation of Israel rather than the nation at large...

— Ishmael had a genetic, ethnic connection to Abraham, but that fact did not establish him to be the sole heir, or even one of the heirs, of God's promises. In a spiritual sense, he was both out of faith and works (Cf. Gal 4:19-31).

— By natural birth, Midianites, Ishmaelites and Edomites would be included as seed of Abraham

— Even though God promised to bless Abraham's descendants, it was only one branch of his family (through Isaac) that He singled out for special blessing. God's special elective purpose applied only to Isaac and his line.

The Scriptures teach that we receive the righteousness of God by faith apart from physical ancestry and legalistic obedience. It was so with Abraham. He "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Earlier in this epistle, Paul wrote: "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom 4:13).

8 That is, it is not the **children of the flesh** who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

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

8 That is, it is not merely the children born through natural descent who were regarded as God's children, but it is the children born through the promise who were regarded as descendants.

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.

- "...children of the flesh" - God did not have all of Abraham's offspring in mind when He spoke of uniquely blessing Abraham's seed. His promise only went to the child born supernaturally, in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

— Neither Ishmael, nor the sons of Hagar nor Keturah, inherited the promises. Only Isaac, the son of the promise, did inherit. Physical descendancy from Abraham was not enough.

*What counts is grace, not race.*

9 For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH WILL HAVE A SON."

9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."

9 For this is the language of the promise: "At this time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

- Quoted from Gen 18:10...

- Note that Ishmael was born in Gen 16, Isaac was born in Gen 21

— In the time between the two being born, after Ishmael but before Isaac, God makes it clear that Sarah will become pregnant and have a son (Isaac), and it is through him that the promises will be fulfilled

— The point that Paul is making is that God does not work through all of Abraham's descendants. If He worked through all of Abraham's descendants, the promises would come through both Ishmael and Isaac. But that's not how God worked...He worked through a tiny minority of Abraham's lineage.

— The application today is...there is a small minority of Jews in faith today; most Jews are in unbelief, but that should not bother you because God has always worked through a minority of Abraham's descendants.

Rom 9:10-23 is the primary proof-text used by Calvinism to argue for "double predestination," the idea that God sovereignly elects those who will be saved and

sovereignly chooses and destines everyone else to hell. Combined with Calvinism's doctrine of Unconditional Election, whereby God sovereignly chooses some to be saved and most to not be saved, double predestination focuses on those who aren't saved by God, those who are confined to hell from birth ("doomed from the womb"). Calvinism believes that God sovereignly chooses the eternal destination of every human being, whether it be heaven or hell, and no one has a free will choice to make concerning accepting or rejecting Christ. And even worse than that, Calvinism believes that God is glorified to send most people to hell. The eternal damnation of His creation, due to His sovereign decision, will burn in hell for eternity separated from Him, and Calvinism thinks this glorifies God.

The over-arching problem with Calvinism's use of this passage to teach double predestination is that passage is ***not speaking of individual election, but Israel's national election***. Jacob and Esau in this passage represent God's sovereign choice of the nation of Israel, not Jacob or Esau individually. God is making a sovereign choice about which of these twins the Messiah will descend from.

The response to Calvinism's arguments are included in the notes of each verse, with a wrap-up of the response in the note after v23.

(ii) Jacob chosen over Esau (9:10-13)

(a) Circumstances of the choice (9:10)

10 And not only *that*, but there was also Rebekah, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

10 Not only that, but Rebecca became pregnant by our ancestor Isaac.

**10** And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac;

- In the example of Jacob and Esau, we have two different children from the same woman (Cf. Gen 25:21-26). In the previous example we had two children from different women (v7-9).

— Both Jacob and Esau were physical descendants of Isaac, just like Isaac and Ishmael were physical descendants of Abraham

- Same conception, diverse destinies...God's election of one portion of Abraham's descendants for special blessing is further evident in His choice of Jacob over Esau

— Some might suggest that Isaac was obviously the natural son through whom blessing would come, since he was the first son born to both Abraham and Sarah. However this was not true of Jacob. Jacob and Esau had the same mother and father, and furthermore were twins, born at the same time (Esau minutes ahead of Jacob, but the same conception).

(b) Divine choice (9:11)

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and **had not done anything good or bad**, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

11 Yet before their children had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God's plan of election might continue to operate

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;)

- God makes another sovereign choice...He's not going to work through both twins (Jacob & Esau), He's only going to work with one of the twins (Jacob)

- "...had not done anything good or bad" - God made an unconditional election of Jacob over Esau; the choice was not conditioned on any perceived goodness or value of one versus the other, or not based on anything Jacob or Esau, or anyone else, has done or would do

— God did not look down through the corridors of time and choose Jacob over Esau because of some goodness He would see in Jacob; God didn't pick the "winner" beforehand

— This doesn't sit well with many people...the fact that God elected one over the other, for no good reason. One wasn't better than the other. God didn't base His choice on merit, only on His sovereign will.

— Left to themselves, neither Jacob or Esau would have had any interest in God or His blessings, and would have remained under the wrath of God (3:9-12,20). For reasons known only to God, God left Esau to his natural bent but changed Jacob's heart.

— Later in v14-19, Paul will address the "fairness" of God's sovereign election. Paul anticipates the objections to this doctrine and deals with them directly.

(c) Statement of the choice (9:12)

12 it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

12 according to his calling and not by actions), Rebecca was told, "The older child will serve the younger one."

12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

- Quoted from Gen 25:23; Cf. Bypass of Firstborn

- This choosing by God of the younger (Jacob) as favored over the older (Esau) is the exact opposite of how it typically worked in the ancient near east; the younger would always serve the older
- If you go through Genesis, God bypasses the firstborn ~11x. This bypass was not for any reason other than divine sovereignty; the verse says that the twins were still in their mother's womb, and had not done anything good or bad, so God's election of one over the other was not based on works.
- But God in this case, and in other cases in Genesis, made a sovereign choice to choose the younger brother over the older. God basically said, I'm going to make a sovereign choice about which of these twins (Esau or Jacob) the Messiah will descend from.
- The reason that God intentionally bypassed the firstborn and chose to work through another is to demonstrate His sovereignty. God is God, and He can do as He pleases.
- Notice that it doesn't say that one will be saved and the other will go to hell...it says that the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob). God is making a *national*, not *individual*, decision here. God made a sovereign choice that the Messiah will come through the line of Jacob, the younger, rather than the line of Esau, the older.
- The fact that Jacob became a less admirable person, in some respects, than Esau, shows that God's choice was not due to Jacob, but to Himself
- The fulfillment of this quote is seen in 2 Sam 8:13-14, when all Edomites became servants to King David during his reign. Later, under Solomon, Edom remained under Israelite control (1 Kings 9:26-28). These historical events fulfill this prophecy, not in individual terms but on national terms, as the subjugation of one nation to another.
- Edom repeatedly opposed Israel in the OT (Cf. Num 20:14-21; 1 Sam 14:47; 2 Sam 8:13-14). God's judgment on Edom is described in Obadiah 10-14, which condemns Edom's violence against Israel. And the focus of His judgment is national and corporate, not personal or individual.

(d) Confirmation of the choice (9:13)

- 13 Just as it is written: "JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE **HATED**."
- 13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
- 13 So it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
- 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
- Quoted from Mal 1:2-3...
  - "...HATED" - *miseō*, the Bible does not use "hate" in the same way we do in English today; it's not animosity or emotional anger, but rather it refers to a choice between two options (Luke 14:26)
  - If there are two options, the option that is not chosen is thought to be "hated" and the option that is chosen is "loved"



— In Luke 14:26, in a call to discipleship, Jesus told a large crowd that if they choose to follow Him in the walk of discipleship, they must "hate" their own father, mother, wife, children, and even his own life.

— Jesus is not commanding people to "hate" (emotionally) everyone close to them as that would contradict many other commands. Jesus is telling them that if there is a conflict between what your parents (for example) tell you to do and what Jesus tells you to do, you pick what Jesus tells you to do. In that sense you "hate" your parents, not in the emotional sense, but in the choice that you make.

— So hate (as used in Gen 29:30-31; Luke 14:26; Rom 9:13) is not talking about an emotional hatred, it is talking about "passing over" one choice in favor of another

— God didn't "hate" Esau as the way we interpret hate...He made a pre-temporal choice to "pass over" Esau in favor of Jacob to fulfill His messianic promises

— Again (Cf. v9), the point is that God did not work through all of Isaac's descendants, just as He did not work through all of Abraham's descendants. This is God's pattern since the very beginning...God works through a minority within the nation of Israel.

— Paul is telling the Romans here, through these examples, that they should not be concerned that God has abrogated His promises to Israel because He will fulfill them, but only through a remnant of the entire nation, just as He has done since the beginning.

- At first glance, this verse appears to say that God arbitrarily loved one person (Jacob) and despised the other (Esau). But when you understand the context—both in Malachi and the OT background—it is crystal clear that this isn't about personal salvation or eternal destiny. It's about nations, not individuals.

— One of the things you have to do to interpret the Bible correctly is understanding the context. In real estate, the three most important things are location, location, location. In Bible interpretation, the three most important things are context, context, context.

— In Malachi 1, God is addressing the nation of Israel and contrasting them with Edom—the nation descended from Esau. The passage speaks of Edom's land being desolate and its inheritance given to jackals (Cf. Mal 1:3-4). This is language of corporate judgment, not personal animosity. Malachi is not recounting God's emotional disposition toward two men—he's explaining Israel's favored status as God's covenant people in contrast with Edom's rejection.

— In Gen 25, which describes the births of Jacob and Esau, also has a national (not individual) focus. In Gen 25:23, God tells Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people will be stronger than the other; and the older will serve the younger." From the beginning, before they were even born, Jacob and Esau symbolized two peoples/nations—Israel and Edom—with different roles in redemptive history. Paul's use of this in Rom 9 is a reminder that God has the freedom to

choose how He accomplishes His redemptive purposes—it's not a statement about individual election to salvation or damnation.

— Deut 32:8-9 shows that God intentionally apportioned the nations and reserved Israel as His special portion. This supports the theme of national selection rather than individual predestination. Gen 36:1,8-9 links Esau directly with Edom, which further affirms the national scope.

- But Calvinism reads this passage as God chose Jacob for life, and chose Esau for death, leading to their unbiblical belief in double predestination

— They read this as God made a sovereign choice on both accounts...to save one and to sovereignly predestine the other to eternal damnation

— But this verse has nothing to do with Esau going to hell because he was not sovereignly chosen to be saved. It simply means that God did not choose him for the national honor of bringing forth the Messiah.

— Paul here is not laying out a theology of individual salvation...he's done that already earlier in this epistle (Cf. 3:21—5:21). He is showing that God has the right to sovereignly choose how and through whom His redemptive purposes unfold. Israel was chosen to carry the covenant and bring forth the Messiah—not because of works or merit, but because of God's overarching plan. Edom was not chosen for that role.

Despite Israel's disobedience, God's promises to the nation, like God Himself, remained unchanged. Disobedience never causes God to dishonor His own Word. If God had transferred all Israel's promises to the Church, Paul could have omitted much of Rom 9-11. Instead, Paul proclaimed, "God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (11:29). "Irrevocable" means not able to be changed or reversed. Through their unbelief, individuals, leaders, and entire generations may refuse to participate in the blessing of God's promises. Yet God does not remove His promise. He cannot remove His promises because His Word is attached to His unchanging character. His sovereign choice, or election, of Israel remains in force.

(C) God's election of some is consistent with God's justice (v14-29)

The question of fairness arises whenever someone makes a choice to favor one person or group over another. In v14-18, Paul dealt with the justice of God in doing what He did.

(a) First objection (9:14-18)

(i) Objection: God is unrighteous (9:14a)

(ii) Emphatic denial (9:14b)

**14** What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? **Far from it!**

**14** What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

**14** What can we say, then? God is not unrighteous, is he? Of course not!

**14** What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

- Objection #1 to God's sovereign election: Does God exercising sovereign election (choosing Jacob over Esau) prove that God is unrighteous (unfair)?

- "Far from it!" - *Me genoita*, the strongest negation in the Greek language; also translated "God forbid!" God cannot be unjust because He is God.

Is God unrighteous/unfair because He selected Jacob over Esau? Absolutely not! Election has nothing to do with justice, but rather free grace. Ignorant people often say, "God is unjust if He chooses one and leaves another." But the purpose of God goes beyond justice—if God did only what was just, He would have to condemn all of us to Hell!

God is just in His being and He always acts justly. Through His redemptive death on the Cross, Jesus satisfied the righteous demands of God for the penalty of sin. On that basis, God can remain just and justify anyone who places his faith in Christ Jesus (Cf. 3:25-26). If Christ had not died, then God in His justice would have condemned all men because all men are under sin (Cf. 3:9).

Paul uses Moses (Ex 33:19) and Pharaoh (Ex 9:16) as proof that God can do what He wishes in dispensing His grace and mercy. Nobody deserves God's mercy, and nobody can condemn God for His choice of Israel or His bypassing of other nations.

(iii) Proof (9:15-18)

(a) God confers mercy upon who He wants (9:15)

15 For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL SHOW COMPASSION TO WHOMEVER I SHOW COMPASSION."

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

15 For he says to Moses, "I will be merciful to the person I want to be merciful to, and I will be kind to the person I want to be kind to."

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.

- Quoted from Ex 33:18...

- Paul quotes this verse from Exodus dealing with Pharaoh, and how God raised up Pharaoh for a specific purpose: to enslave the Jews and to harden his heart against God — Paul brings up Pharaoh to show that God confers mercy on whomever He wants. As Creator, God has a perfect right to choose whomever of His creatures He wills.

— His reasons are never in us but always in Him. His absolute holiness, impartiality, justice, goodness and love guarantee His choices always conform to His character, His Word and His will.

— ***God's election is always by His grace, for His glory, and to our good***

— If God were not free to confer mercy onto whomever He wants, none of us would be blessed because none of us deserve His mercy

— Divine mercy and compassion are expressions of God's sovereign choice. No person deserves divine mercy, and no person can do anything to merit it. The question shouldn't be why did God show mercy to one and not the other; instead, the question should be why does God show mercy to anyone, because no one deserves it

- When Israel rebelled against God by worshipping the golden calf (Ex 32), God took the lives of only 3,000 of the rebels. He would have been justified in slaying the whole nation. His "mercy" caused Him to do something that appeared to be unjust. The fact is, no one deserves mercy, so God is not unjust. Study carefully Ex 33-34, esp. 33:12-17; 34:1,27-28,32.

— What were the circumstances when God declared that? In response to Moses' intercession (Ex 33:19); Moses even offered to die in their stead (Ex 32:32). If God's favor were free and unmerited to Moses, how much more so it is to others. Moses was declared to be the most meek of all men on the earth, yet his meekness did not merit God's mercy. God's mercy was totally apart from any human merit, and if that were true with Moses, it is certainly true of all.

— God's mercy is not extended as a recognition of human will, nor is it a reward of human work

God's elective purpose manifests His mercy and His grace. To this point in Romans, Paul has spoken often of God's grace, but not of His mercy. However, until His mercy is understood, His grace cannot be fully appreciated.

(b) God is free to select those who will play positive and negative roles in His purpose (9:16-18)

16 **Sothen**, *it does not depend* on the *person* who wants *it* nor the one who runs, but on God who has mercy.

16 So then *it does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

16 Therefore, God's choice does not depend on a person's will or effort, but on God himself, who shows mercy.

16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

- Because He is God, He is free to select one person for a task that would glorify God, and another person for another task that would oppose God

— God is God and we are not, so God can do whatever He pleases with His creation. His title as God gives Him the divine prerogative to do that.

- "So then" - Paul now draws a logical conclusion based on what he just said: mercy does not depend on the one willing or running. In other words, it is not dependent upon human desire or effort, but rather solely on God's sovereign choice. God has chosen to extend His mercy only to that part of the Israel who believes, the Remnant.

— God is under no obligation to show mercy to anyone. Neither human desire ("the person who wants it") nor human effort ("the one who runs") moves Him to select. God acts, He does not react. His redemptive choice is unconditional.

— If we insist on receiving just treatment from God, what we will get is condemnation (3:23)

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "**FOR THIS VERY REASON I RAISED YOU UP**, IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE EARTH."

17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."

17 For the Scripture says about Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for this very purpose, to demonstrate my power through you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

- Quoted from Ex 9:16...

- The reader may say, How could you do this God? God says, I do it all the time. Here's an example in Pharaoh...

— Here, Paul is using God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart as a justification for God choosing Jacob over Esau to bring forth the Messiah

— Calvinism looks at v15 & v17 and says, There you go, God elected Pharaoh to go to hell. And to assure that he would go there, God hardened his heart.

— This is proof, in their minds, of their double-predestination doctrine...except it's not. Just like you have to understand the context of Romans 9 to understand what it says, you have to read somewhere outside of a single verse in Exodus to understand what is really going on with Pharaoh's heart (this is basic Bible study 101):

- When God called Moses (Ex 4:21), He commanded him to perform the miracles that God gave him the power to do, and foretold to Moses (2x) that He would eventually harden Pharaoh's heart (Cf. Ex 4:21; 7:3). Just as God made a pre-temporal sovereign choice between Jacob and Esau, God determined beforehand that He was going to harden Pharaoh's heart.
- Exodus states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart 6x (Cf. Ex 7:13,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7) before God began to harden Pharaoh's heart (Ex 9:12; see notes on Ex 4:21)
- By hardening Pharaoh's heart, God was simply confirming Pharaoh's own free will, which fulfilled God's preordained divine plan, which was to give God the opportunity to demonstrate His power to the world through the 10 plagues.
- After Pharaoh hardened his own heart on at least six different occasions, then God began to harden Pharaoh's heart
  - What happened to Pharaoh is a good example of what happens to people when they put themselves into a place of such spiritual darkness that they are unable to receive truth. But long before that happens, to get to that dark point, people make their own free will decisions to reject truth.
  - One of the scariest things we see in the Bible is that sometimes God allows people to have what they want, and sometimes God even expedites the process. But long before that happens, that person is making poor decisions of their own free will.
  - A good example of this is in Rom 1:21,28, where the same thing happens to the unbelieving Gentile world. Three times in that passage (v18-32), it says that "God gave them over" (v24,26,28) to a debased mind.
- In both the episode with Pharaoh, and the description of unbelieving Gentiles in Rom 1, ***God is not arbitrarily hardening the hearts of people so they cannot believe the gospel.*** God doesn't do that. Long before God makes the decision to hand people over to spiritual darkness so they cannot see or reason spiritually, they first put themselves in that position out of their own free will (Cf. Rom 1:18, men "suppress the truth in unrighteousness"). God's revelation to them is so obvious that they are "without excuse" for their unbelief and rejection.

— See [Divine Hardening of the Heart](#) for details about God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart

- So the pattern is that human beings made a sovereign choice, out of their own free will.

And once that choice was made, a divine pre-temporal plan went into action. We see this tension between man's free will and God's sovereign election all through the Bible: when man makes his free will choice, it is as if they are fulfilling a divine destiny.

— The moment Adam & Eve ate from the wrong tree, of their own free will, it fulfilled a divine plan. Rev 13:8 describes Jesus as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The cross was not a reaction to Adam & Eve's sin, it had already been foreordained by God through His foreknowledge.

— The moment Adam & Eve sinned, God didn't come up with the plan for the second member of the Trinity to become a Man and die to pay for the sin of the world. The plan was in place from before the foundation of the world.

— Judas was given a choice...he followed the Lord for three years, heard His teachings and witnessed His miracles, but through an act of his own free will he chose to reject Jesus Christ. The moment he rejected Jesus was the moment he was fulfilling the preordained plan of God (Ps 41:9).

— In John 13:18 Jesus said: *I am not speaking about all of you. I know **the ones whom I have chosen; but this is happening** so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'*

— In Acts 2:23, Peter says to the Jews who had rejected Christ, on the Day of Pentecost: this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

— First, Peter tells them that the death of Christ was the predetermined plan of God; yet Peter turns around and tells them that *they* exercised their free will and nailed Him to a cross. The moment these Jews exercised their free will as image bearers of God was the moment that they fulfilled a divine script written before the foundation of the world.

— God is so great that He can use the free will of human beings to fulfill His divine plan - "...FOR THIS VERY REASON I RAISED YOU UP" - Pharaoh deserved death for his opposition and insolence, but God did not take his life in the remaining plagues so that his continuing opposition and God's victory over him would result in greater glory for God (Cf. Joshua 9:9; Ps 76:10)

— This is another example, similar to v15, of God not giving people what they deserve—but extending mercy to them instead

— It shows that God raised up Pharaoh at this specific point in history and put him on the throne to serve as an example of what divine justice is all about. God had both an immediate purpose ("TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU") and a distant purpose ("THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE EARTH").

God elevated a sinful person out from a fallen human race and idolatrous nation to the position of the highest ruler in Egypt and in the Middle East. Pharaoh had the opportunity to glorify God and to bless the covenant nation of Israel, but he refused to do so. God knew about this rejection, and said to Pharaoh through Moses: "Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go." (Ex 9:17). God then manifested His power by pouring out His plagues of wrath against the Egyptians, by delivering Israel out of her bondage, and by causing other nations to know that the God of Israel was the one and only true God of the universe (Joshua 2:8-14).

But before the 10 plagues against Egypt, God told Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Ex 4:21; 7:3). But during the first five plagues, the Scriptures say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex 7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34-35; 13:15). Later, only after God patiently endured Pharaoh's hard heart, Scripture says, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (Ex 9:12; 10:1,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17).

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

18 Therefore, God has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

- The objection (v15) is: because God sovereignly chooses to work through one person over another, God is unrighteous and unfair

- Paul's response is No, God is not unfair. He is God, and because He is God, He has the ability and freedom to select those who will play both positive and negative roles in the outworking of His divine purposes, while also respecting the free will of His created beings.

- Again here, the Calvinistic reading of this verse is that God elected one to salvation and another to damnation. But that's not what the verse says.

- They reason, See, God hardens people (i.e. Pharaoh) to the point that they cannot believe the gospel, so He could judge them. But they don't recognize that God only hardened Pharaoh's heart after he hardened his own heart 6x. At that point, God's mercy and patience ran out, and He confirmed Pharaoh in judgment (by hardening his heart) so that His sovereign plan could be carried out.

- In the Calvinistic mindset, He does this because He loves one and hates the other (Cf. v13)

- This is a summary statement for v14-17. Paul here is referring to Pharaoh; God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God used Pharaoh as an instrument of oppression against the Jewish people so that God could judge Pharaoh.

- Moses is an example of election in regard to mercy; Pharaoh is example of hardening in reference to judgment

- In Rom 1, Paul spoke about how God gives people over to their own evil desires as a form of punishment for sin. This is how God hardens people's hearts.

- In Pharaoh's case, we see this working out clearly. God was not unjust because He allowed the hardening process to continue. His justice demanded punishment.

- When you look at this whole story, you see that Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God about 6x. The narrative reads Pharaoh hardened his heart a number of times, then finally in His sovereignty, God gave Pharaoh over to what he wanted all along.



**— Neither in the case of Pharaoh, or anyone else in Scripture, is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself**

— God's hardening, then, is an action that renders a person insensitive to God and His Word that, if not reversed, culminates in eternal damnation. It does not cause spiritual insensitivity to the things of God; it maintains people in the state of sin that already characterizes them.

— Paul never says or implies that God created man for the purpose of his damnation. What he does say is that in His sovereign governing of the world, God reserves to Himself perfect freedom for dealing with man on His own conditions, not on man's conditions.

— Men are not lost because they are hardened; they are hardened because they are lost; they are lost because they are sinners.

— The Remnant is the recipient of God's mercy, and the non-Remnant of God's hardening

**(b) Second objection (9:19-29)**

Paul replies with a parable about the potter (Jer 18:1-6). God is the Potter, and the nations of the world (and their leaders) are the vessels. Some are vessels of wrath that God patiently endures until their time of destruction (Gen 15:16); others are vessels of mercy that reveal His glory. Paul then quotes Hosea to show that God promised to call a "people" from among the Gentiles, a people to be called "children of the living God." (Hosea 2:23 and 1:10). This is the Church. He also quotes Isaiah, showing that a Remnant of Jews would also be saved (Is 10:22-23; Cf. Is 1:9).

In other words, God's purpose in election makes it possible for both Jews and Gentiles to be saved by grace. *Neither Jew nor Gentile could be saved any way other than by the grace of God.*

The issue here is the execution of divine will and the human perception of that execution. Paul anticipated a protest against God's sovereign will—the election of some to salvation and the hardening of others to retribution.

Paul's reply to the protest is direct: v20. The contrasts are obvious: between man and God, between the creature and the Creator, and between the clay and the Potter. God is God, thus He can do anything He pleases. Man is man, thus he cannot dictate to God what the Almighty can or cannot do (Cf. Is 45:9; 29:16). Those who meet God fall into the dust: Abraham (Gen 18:27); Job (Job 30:19; 42:6).

**(i) Objection: God cannot hold people morally accountable (9:19)**

**19** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"

**19** You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

**19** You may ask me, "Then why does God still find fault with anybody? For who can resist his will?"

**19** Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

- Objection #2 to God's sovereign election: If God sovereignly elects certain people over others, how can He then hold them morally accountable?

— The question is: "If God hardens hearts, how can He blame anyone when they are doing what he willed them to do?"

— In his answer in the following verses, Paul deals with the attitude of the heart that produced the question. The question implies a total forgetfulness of the relationship of the created to the Creator, the relationship of man to God.

- The "objector" in this passage isn't honestly asking a question...they are blaming God.

"Why does He still find fault? and "For who has resisted His will?" are not questions, they are accusations.

— In v20, Paul exposes the heart behind these objections...

A subtle moral lie hides in our complaints against God: We tend to shrink God into our own image (Ps 50:21).

(ii) Two answers (9:20-29)

(a) God's status as Creator gives Him the right to elect (9:20-21)

20 On the contrary, who are you, you *foolish* person, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

20 On the contrary, who are you—mere man that you are—to talk back to God? Can an object that was molded say to the one who molded it, "Why did you make me like this?"

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?

- Paul's first answer to the 2nd objection is not to make a philosophical point, but rather to point out the irreverence in questioning God's choices and actions, along with the arrogance and presumption of the person who would question God

— It is an irreverent attitude to come to God and charge Him with unfairness or unrighteousness because He doesn't operate in the way I think He should operate

— People making moral objections to how God runs His universe is like a coffee mug that you created objecting to the type of coffee you choose to put in it

— Paul says that someone making this objection, first and foremost, needs an attitude adjustment

— This is what we're doing when we question God's fairness...it's like a small human, with limited intelligence and a corrupted human nature, speaking against a perfectly righteous,

omniscient, omnipotent God. So we have to look at our motives when you get into the position of challenging God.

— The point of the illustration is to place man in a proper relationship to the Creator: if God did not elect, none would have been saved, for “there is none that seek after God” (Cf. 3:1)

21 Or does the potter not have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one object for honorable use, and another for common use?

21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

21 A potter has the right to do what he wants to with his clay, doesn't he? He can make something for a special occasion or something for ordinary use from the same lump of clay.

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

- Paul's second response (v20b-21) is that we, as created beings, are not qualified to question or challenge God or His divine plan

— The reason is because God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent...and we're not

— The other thing God has and we don't is a perfect character, which is absolutely holy, absolutely upright, absolutely just and absolutely gracious. Seeing this, how can I sit in judgment of God on how He works?

— Paul says that we're just as unqualified to question God and His works as a clay pot is to question a potter

- Based on this verse, Calvinism believes that you're not even allowed to question this doctrine (double predestination) because God is God and you are not...

— To them, for someone (a non-Calvinist) to say to God that it isn't fair or just for Him to choose people to go straight to eternal destruction, without ever having the ability or chance to be saved, is questioning God and this verse says you can't do that.

- There are many passages of Scripture that are difficult for us to understand (like this one). When we encounter these and cannot comprehend them, we need to invoke Is 55:8-9: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

— If we don't invoke this passage when we encounter difficult to understand passages, we will become bitter against God. Many people are in this state...they don't think God works things out as He should in their lives, so they become angry at God. But the fact of the matter is, God is doing things that we cannot even fathom.

— Do you want to worship a God that you can completely understand? If I can understand everything about God and His works, that would mean that I'm just as smart as God. If He's no smarter than little old me, why should He be God instead of me?

All humans constitute the clay and belong to a fallen human race. They are all under sin—unrighteous, guilty, and deserving of eternal wrath (Rom 3:9-10,19). If God chooses to shape a sinner into a son of God, a vessel for honor, He has that prerogative. If God chooses to shape a sinner into a vessel for dishonor, He also has that prerogative. In the first illustration, the sinner gets what he *does not* deserve; in the second, the sinner gets what he deserves. God can receive praise from both the saved and the unsaved. Both salvation and judgment bring glory to Him.

### **So how does a non-Calvinist answer Calvinism's teaching and allegations in this passage?**

First for foremost, you have to put Rom 9 into its context. In Rom 9-11, God is not dealing in soteriology as He was in Rom 3-5, or sanctification as He was in Rom 6-8. In Rom 9-11, God is dealing with the nation of Israel.

In Rom 9, Paul is not dealing with individual election of believers...he's dealing with the *national election* of Israel. Paul explains how Israel nationally tripped over Jesus because they wanted salvation their way, not the way in which God prescribed. They wanted/tried to be saved through their own righteousness, but that's not how it works. They needed the imputed righteousness of Christ.

In Rom 10, Paul explains what went wrong, and in Rom 11 he explains how God will keep every single promise He made to the nation of Israel. They will go into the 70th Week of Daniel and near the end, call out to Christ to rescue them.

Is 65:21-22:

21 "They will build houses and inhabit *them*; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

22 "They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so *will be* the days of My people, And **My chosen ones** will fully enjoy the work of their hands.

- The choice God made in the OT of Israel was a national election, not an individual election

Deut 7:7-8:

**7** "The LORD did not make you His beloved nor **choose you** because you were greater in number than any of the peoples, since you were the fewest of all peoples,

**8** but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

- Again, God elected Israel nationally; He did not elect individual Jews

So when Calvinism goes to Rom 9 and reads into it individual election, they are not understanding the context. Rom 9 describes God's *national* election of Israel, not His *individual* election of certain people over others, or the special election of some people to go to hell.

In addition, the Bible is clear that God does not take pleasure in meting out His wrath against unbelievers, nor does He take pleasure in the death of the wicked:

Ezek 18:23,32:

23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he would turn from his ways and live?

32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live!"

Ezek 33:11: Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then should you die, house of Israel?'

See Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 19-23 Unconditional Election (Is 55:8-9; Acts 17:30; Acts 13:48; Deut 7:7; Ex 4:21) for more information on Double Predestination.

In summary, the Calvinist interpretation of Rom 9 fails because it is:

1. Divorced from the context of Rom 9-11
2. Assumes unconditional meaning for ambiguous language
3. Seeks to extrude a preconceived theology from the text
4. Divorced from the OT background quotations which have to do with the relationship of Jews and Gentiles and how God's plan includes the salvation of both groups.

(b) God elects to demonstrate His mercy (9:22-29)

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, **endured with great patience objects of wrath prepared** for destruction?

22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

22 Now if God wants to demonstrate his wrath and reveal his power, can't he be extremely patient with the objects of his wrath that are made for destruction?

**22** What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to [prepared for] destruction:

- Paul now goes on to explain that when God uses His divine prerogative of election, He does so in harmony with His character

— If you're going to study election and foreknowledge, but ignore everything else that God teaches about Himself in the Bible, you're going to walk away thinking that God is evil, capricious, dangerous and arbitrary

— When God exercises His divine prerogative, He doesn't do so outside of His righteous character. He doesn't elect some over others to be evil or mean because His divine character doesn't allow Him to do so. When God acts in one way, He is bound by His other attributes.

- "...endured with great patience" - God didn't just arbitrarily bestow judgment on Pharaoh, but rather He endured with great patience, seeking to allow Pharaoh ample room for repentance

— God didn't immediately come into Pharaoh's life and override his free will. God endured with Pharaoh until the very end, until Pharaoh had gone so far that he solidified himself against God. It was only at that point that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

— Jesus stood beside Judas until the bitter end, even calling him "friend" up until just before the betrayal

— There was nothing within God that said I hate Judas and I'm going to override his free will and use him to betray My Son. That's not how God worked in Judas, and it's not how he works in us. God is patient, He stands with us until the very end. In Judas' case, there was wooing, there was grief, there was friendship, there was servanthood (Jesus washed Judas' feet), and there was grief and sadness on the part of Christ when Judas betrayed Him.

— Paul is saying here that God endures with great patience even those vessels who are foreordained to work a negative purpose in God's plan

- "...objects of wrath" - all unsaved people are prepared for destruction because destruction is the necessary consequence of sin (Cf. 3:23)

— In the case of the "objects of wrath," God is passive. People prepare themselves for destruction by failing to repent (Cf. 2:4-5). On the other hand, God actively prepares the "vessels of mercy" to enjoy "the riches of His glory" (v23).

— Therefore, if people are saved, credit belongs to God alone. If others remain lost, they alone are responsible.

- "...prepared" - *katartizō*, the verb is in the passive voice meaning that the "objects of wrath" prepared *themselves* for destruction; men fit *themselves* for destruction

— People prepare themselves for destruction by pursuing sin (Rom 1; Cf. Matt 7:13; Phil 3:19; 1 Thess 2:15-16; 2 Thess 2:3)

Let's not confuse God's actions with man's responsibility:

Ps 58:3: The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Prov 16:4: The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

1 Peter 2:8: And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Ezek 3:20: Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Ezek 20:24-25:

24 Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;

Yet, John 3:18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

23 And *He did* so to make known the riches of His glory upon objects of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

23 And *He did* so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

23 Can't he also reveal his glorious riches to the objects of his mercy that he has prepared ahead of time for glory—

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

- When God elects, He is bound by His other attributes and His character

- In v22, He patiently endures with those instruments who are bound for destruction; He also, when He elects, does so to bring about a higher purpose (Is 55:8-9)

- When God sovereignly elects, He does not do it arbitrarily or maliciously, but to bring about a greater good

- What was this greater good? Why did God finally harden Pharaoh's heart?

- God wanted a scenario in which the nation of Israel was in bondage in Egypt, and they wouldn't be released because Pharaoh was hardened against God. God wanted this scenario because it would bring glory to Himself. Through the 10 plagues, God not only destroyed the Egyptian's gods and demonstrated His power as Almighty God, but also because it would be the greatest testimony to the unsaved world of the power of God up to that point in history.

- So after Pharaoh confirmed himself against God 6x, as God "patiently endured" (v22), God then hardened Pharaoh's heart to bring about a greater good

— The 10 plagues were instruments by which the Canaanites were warned of the power of God (Joshua 2:10). By the time Joshua and the Israelites entered into the Promised Land, the Canaanites were well aware of the power of God. Had God not hardened Pharaoh's heart, he may have decided to repent, and thus there would be no world stage on which God would exercise His power as a witness to unbelievers.

— Without God's mighty works through the 10 plagues and the miracles by which He brought Israel out of Egypt, God would have no avenue to get His character and power out to the nations and warn the Canaanites

— All the while, God both endured with Pharaoh in patience until the very end, to give him room for repentance, and God never violated Pharaoh's free will as an image bearer of God

24 *namely* us, whom He also called, not only from among Jews, but also from among Gentiles,

24 *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

24 including us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but from the gentiles as well?

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

- We may not understand everything God does, and we may not understand God's purpose when He exercises His divine prerogative, but one thing we do understand is that at the end of the day, God has in His mind mercy for every single human being

— Scripture is clear that God desires none to perish, but all to come to a knowledge of Him (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)

— So when God does something that we do not understand or even agree with, we can rest assured that when He exercises His divine prerogative, He does so consistent with all of His other attributes, because at the end of the day, God is merciful to all, even to the Gentiles (v25-26)

God does not predestine a morally neutral person to condemnation. However, He has determined that sinners will pay for their sin and rejection of divine truth. God manifests His long-suffering toward sinners in that He puts up with their rebellion throughout their earthly experiences. On the other hand, the saved are the vessels of mercy, the ones who will share in the eternal glory of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles, being human and fallen, deserve divine wrath. However, in His mercy, God has called both Jews and Gentiles to Himself through justifying faith in Jesus Christ. God is the Savior of all who believe; God is also the Judge of all who reject.

It surprises some to learn that salvation is not first of all about people. God's ultimate purpose in all things is to make His triune glory known (see: Doxological Purpose of God).



Salvation is about God the Father's exaltation of God the Son, proclaimed by God the Holy Spirit. In saving some and not saving others, God makes known His mercy, compassion, power and righteous wrath. God considers the display of all His glorious attributes worth the whole historical drama—worth creation, worth the Fall, worth election, worth redemption at the Cross, and worth His coming restoration and renewal of all things, including Israel. God's unshakable priority throughout all of human history is to make His glory known.

### **Israel = Nation or Remnant?**

In this section, Paul demonstrates that only the believing Remnant within the nation of Israel constituted the real covenant people. The basis of their spiritual acceptance before God is the same as that for believing Gentiles. Thus, the genuine family of God in this dispensation is made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who together are formed into one body, the Church (Eph 2:11-22). Both believing Jews and believing Gentiles are divinely called the "vessels of mercy which (God) had prepared beforehand for glory" (v23).

Paul selected four portions of OT prophecy to show that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel" (v6). Two passages from Hosea (1:10; 2:23) show God always intended to include Gentiles in His plan of salvation. Two passages from Isaiah (1:9; 10:22-23) explain God's electing call never included every Jew, only the faithful Remnant.

### **Historical Background on Hosea**

Hosea ministered at the time of the divided kingdom, specifically to the Northern Kingdom. God directed Hosea to marry Gomer to symbolize the spiritual adultery of the land (Hosea 1:23). To this union, three children were born: Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah, and Lo-Ammi (Hosea 2:4-8). The meanings of the children's names depicted God's relationship to Israel. Jezreel meant "scattered," Lo-Ruhamah meant "no mercy," and Lo-Ammi meant "not my people." God said that He would bring an end to the northern kingdom of Israel (Hosea 1:4), that He would no longer have mercy on the house of Israel (Hosea 1:6), that Israel would no longer be His people, and that He would no longer be their God (Hosea 1:9). These prophecies were fulfilled when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and scattered many of its inhabitants.

Paul used this historical background to show the spiritual truth that God would take His people out of those who previously were not His people. This reality could only be applied to the believing Remnant within Israel and in an extended way to believing Gentiles. Both groups were once unsaved, but through divine grace and human repentant-faith, both have become His people.

**25** as He also says in Hosea: "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE **NOT MY PEOPLE**, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'"

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

**25** As the Scripture says in Hosea, "Those who are not my people I will call my people, and the one who was not loved I will call my loved one.

**25** As he saith also in Hosea, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

- A quote from Hosea 2:23...

- "...NOT MY PEOPLE" - Gentiles

— The inclusion of Gentiles into this group is in harmony with OT prophecy, which foretold both the calling of Gentiles and the preservation of a Jewish remnant

— Hosea 2:23 and 1:10, in their contexts, refer to a reversal of Israel's status

— Peter also quotes this in a similar manner (1 Peter 2:9)

— Paul's quotation of this verse not a fulfillment of Hosea, but an application because of a similar situation. In Hosea, God declared that Israel was His people, but because of their sin, he was going to expel them from the Land. For a period of time they would become *not my people*.

— Experientially speaking, Israel started out as being God's people, but then God said that they would no longer receive the benefits of being His people for a period of time. Later, Israel would repent and become experientially God's people again. Hosea is speaking about Israel moving from the position of "not my people" to becoming "my people" again.

**26** "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD."

**26** "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

**26** In the very place where it was told them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called children of the living God."

**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.

- A quote from Hosea 1:10...

— This prophecy refers to Gentiles any place on the earth who turn to Christ now or in the future. Every Gentile alive today is the object of the mercy of God described here.

— At the end of the day, once all votes are counted and all opinions tallied, there isn't a single person who will be able to point a finger and say God, You were not good, You were not kind.

— That may mean that electing of some and the passing over of others, so be it. I may not like it, I may not agree with it, but I do know that God exercises His divine prerogative in concert with all of His other attributes and within His divine character.

- The bottom line is: we can trust God. We may not be able to understand Him, but we can trust Him implicitly

— We can trust that when our lives take a turn that we don't agree with, that we didn't plan for, that the resulting pain, difficulty and heartbreak that comes into our lives that He will work out according to His divine will and for our good (8:28).

**27** Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL MAY BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, ONLY THE REMNANT WILL BE SAVED;

**27** Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

**27** Isaiah also calls out concerning Israel, "Although the descendants of Israel are as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, only a few will be saved.

**27** Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

- v27-28 is quoted from Is 10:22-23...

- God's kindness and mercy will also be bestowed upon the Jews...that same nation who rejected Him and put Him to death on the cross

— But Israel's election as a nation did not preclude God's judgment of the unbelievers in it. His mercy and faithfulness are shown in His sparing of the Remnant.

- From the beginning, it was only a Remnant that will be saved: Is 10:20-23; 11:11,16; 37:32 (written before Babylon); Jer 23:3; 50:20; Micah 2:12; 4:7; Zeph 2:7

— Is 10:22-23 anticipated the depletion of Israel through Sennacherib's invasion, which was God's instrument of judgment. When Paul wrote Romans, the believing Remnant of Israel was within the Church, as it is today.

— Study "the Remnant": Gen 45:7; Is 1:9; 10:21-22; 11:11,16; 46:3; Jer 23:3; Ezek 6:8; Amos 5:15; Micah 2:12; 5:7-8; Zeph 2:7,9; 3:13; Zech 8:6,12

**28** FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY."

**28** for the Lord will execute His word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly."

**28** For the Lord will carry out his plan decisively, bringing it to completion on the earth."

**28** For he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And just as Isaiah foretold: "IF THE LORD OF ARMIES HAD NOT LEFT US DESCENDANTS, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE GOMORRAH."

29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah."

29 It is just as Isaiah predicted: "If the Lord of the Heavenly Armies had not left us some descendants, we would have become like Sodom and would have been compared to Gomorrah."

**29** And as Isaiah [Esaias] said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.

- Quoted from Is 1:9...

- If God had not tempered His judgment with mercy, He would have destroyed Israel as completely as He had obliterated Sodom and Gomorrah

— The only reason Israel has survived is due to God's intervention and grace, based on His covenant with Abraham. If He didn't intervene, they would have been entirely destroyed.

— It is the Remnant through whom God will fulfill His program, not the entire nation. God keeps the nation alive because of the believing Remnant, thus the believing Remnant is responsible for keeping the nation alive.

God, however, did not judge the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah in like manner. In his sovereign grace, He preserved a "seed." That seed goes beyond the obvious survival of physical Jewry to the divine calling of a believing remnant within Israel. Later on, Paul will argue: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Cf. 11:5).

We are so wrong and shortsighted if we focus on the negative when we think of election. Instead, election is opportunity. The Bible focuses on the positive. God's ultimate purpose in human history is not judgment; God does not elect to send people to hell. The Bible clearly shows that hell was our starting point from the beginning, since Adam's choice to sin against God. If this was God's purpose, He would not have given us Scripture, and He surely would never have sent His Son to be our Savior. Instead, He would have done nothing.

If sovereign election does not seem "fair," what seems fair about the Cross? God exercised His power and authority by electing the Son as just provision for our salvation. What is fair about that?

Election is both necessary and gracious. It could not be otherwise because "there is no one righteous, not even one (3:10-11). Sin so pervades every one of our actions and natural understanding that, if God had not chosen to call out a people to belong to Him by faith, no one would be saved. The real wonder is that (why?) God displays His mercy to anyone. We

are all sinners, with no righteousness of our own to offer to God. But God, in His infinite wisdom of Jesus Christ, accomplished the righteousness that God requires.

(2) Israel in the present: Rejected (Rom 9:30—10:21)

From 9:30 through 10:21, Paul carefully explains that Jewish unbelief is not God's fault. The gospel came first to the Jews, but most worked for human righteousness, which saves no one. Tragically, most failed to see their need for salvation, so they did not find God's righteousness. Now that Jewish and Gentile believers are members of the Church, a question was on the mind of many: Is God just? Was it fair that the Jews, who pursued righteousness by the Law, had not attained it? Is it fair that the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, obtained it?

(A) Israel pursued righteousness by Law rather than by faith (9:30—10:4)

(a) Israel's refusal to righteousness by faith (9:30-33)

**30** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue **righteousness, attained** righteousness, but the righteousness that is by faith;

**30** What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

**30** What can we say, then? Gentiles, who were not pursuing righteousness, have attained righteousness, a righteousness that comes through faith.

**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.

- The chapter division between Rom 9 & 10 should happen here because this is where Paul changes his topic from Israel in the past to Israel in the present

- In Rom 10, Paul gives us three reasons why Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah

1. Israel pursued righteousness by the Law rather than by faith (9:30—10:4)
2. Israel ignored the teaching that righteousness is by faith rather than works (10:5-13)
3. Israel refused many opportunities to accept God's righteousness by faith (10:14-21)

- Paul says that Gentile believers in Christ "got it" because they came to Christ in the right way, by faith

- "...righteousness" - throughout this passage, the term refers to salvation; to be more precise, it refers to justification

- Paul couches the terminology of a foot race in his last question

— Israel struggled hard to obtain ("pursued") the prize of righteousness that God requires for acceptance by Him. However, they crossed the finish line behind Gentiles, who were not running as hard.

— The only answer to why Gentiles are being saved is that God, in His grace, sought them. Their salvation shows that righteousness comes by grace through faith in Christ.

- "...attained" - *katalambano*, to lay hold of, or to make one's own; better translated "obtained"; the Gentiles "obtained" God's righteousness by receiving it as a gift — See "attained" [KJV] in v31; although the KJV (and some other translations) use the word "attained" in both v30 and v31, they are two different Greek words. A better translation in v31 is "arrive" [NASB] or "achieve" [ISV].

### **Why Are More Gentiles than Jews Saved in the Present Dispensation?**

From Abraham to Jesus Christ, that situation was reversed. In the OT era, there were more righteous, saved Jews than Gentiles. What makes the difference? Two reasons are given:

1. The Gentiles received the righteousness of God by faith in total dependence upon the gracious provision of God (9:30-32).
  - Israel, however, sought to gain divine righteousness through outward conformity to the Law of Moses in total dependence upon the ability of self to do so.
  - Israel had the advantage of receiving the law of Moses directly from God (Rom 3:1-2; 9:4). God didn't give the Law so that men would try to keep it in order gain salvation. God gave the Law to show men how holy He is and how unrighteous men are.
  - The Law was designed to create a conviction of moral inadequacy within man. In its moral blindness and hardness, Israel refused to acknowledge their insufficiency.
2. Israel stumbled over the provision of the divine human Messiah who alone could save them (v33; Is 8:14; 28:16; Matt 21:42; 1 Cor 1:23; 1 Peter 2:6-8).
  - In their attempt to work for their salvation, Israel tripped over the provision of the Messiah to do that work for them. They wanted a Messiah who would lead the nation to political freedom and glory; they could not believe in a crucified Christ.
  - Paul's purpose in this chapter is to explain Israel's position in the plan of God. Israel was an elect nation, given privileges that no other nation had, yet it failed miserably to follow God's program of blessing for the world.

In the previous section, Paul dealt with Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Christ from the standpoint of divine sovereignty. In this section, he explains why Israel failed from the standpoint of human responsibility.

31 however, Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law.

31 But Israel, who pursued righteousness based on the Law, did not achieve the Law.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

- Israel, in contrast to the Gentiles, did not "get it" (obtain salvation) because they came to Christ in the wrong way, by Law (works)

- Israel hoped to gain righteousness by doing good works (keeping the Law), but believing Gentiles obtained the prize by believing the gospel ("faith")
- In other words, Israel, pursuing after a law which should give righteousness, did not arrive at such a law. *This is a terrifying statement.* The Jews tried to produce a righteousness of their own through the Mosaic system. They didn't produce it—and look at the nation today. Judaism redefined itself after the destruction of the temple at the Council of Jamnia (90 AD). There is no place for sacrifices, so sin is rationalized away rather than accepting the work of their Messiah.
- People today love to come up with their own way to God, their own religion, and ignore the doctrine and precepts clearly described in Scripture whereby the lost sinner obtains the righteousness of God
- You can't ignore the laws of Scripture just like you can't ignore the physical laws of the universe. The spiritual laws of the universe are just as binding as the physical laws of the universe. I can't one day say that I'm going to ignore the law of gravity...it doesn't work that way. In the same way, I can't one day say that I'm going to ignore the laws of Scripture on how to obtain the righteousness of Christ. You come to God by way of faith, or you're never going to get there...
- And the Gentiles did just that...they came to Christ in faith. The "dogs" or "unwashed masses" got it right by faith, whereas God's chosen and blessed nation didn't get it and attempted to come to God by works of the Law

**32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but *as though they could by works.* They stumbled over the stumbling stone,**

32 Why? Because *they did* not *pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

32 Why not? Because they did not pursue it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on achievements. They stumbled over the stone that causes people to stumble.

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;

- "Why?" - why didn't the Jews "arrive at the Law" (receive God's righteousness, v31)?

- "...as though they could by works" - Israel decided to pursue God through works righteousness

— Works righteousness is where we seek to earn favor and merit before God based on what we do. This is the very definition of "religion."

— Paul explains the paradox...the reason Israel (excluding the Remnant) did not obtain righteousness was because they did not come to it on the basis of faith; rather, they trusted their own works that, in the end, failed to bring them to righteousness.

- So Israel, who sought it failed to attain it because they were trying to attain it by works. Gentiles, who did not seek it, did attain it in the end, because they found it by faith.
- Consequently, they "stumbled" over Christ...
- Jesus Christ showed up on time, in fulfillment of multiple OT prophecies. Because they were in the dark about the meaning of the OT and how to come to Christ the right way, they tripped over Him like you would trip over something that you can't see in the dark.
- Jesus taught this, using the same "stone" analogy, in Matt 21:42,44; Cf. Heb 11:6
- "...They stumbled over the stumbling stone" - intent on winning in her own effort, Israel failed to recognize the "Stone" prophesied in Scripture, who was sent to provide salvation for her.
- It was Israel's avoidance of faith and insistence upon works that caused the problem. This was due to the guilt of Israel in stumbling at the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the Messiah. Their trying to attain righteousness by works carried with it the attitude of rejection of the Messiah Himself.
- Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In this verse, Jesus became the "stone of stumbling" because they must trust Him for salvation. When they failed to trust Him, they stumbled over Him and, as a result, they failed to attain righteousness. They sought righteousness through the Law and they stumbled.

33 just as it is written: "BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND THE ONE **WHO** BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE **PUT TO SHAME.**"

33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

33 As it is written, "Look! I am placing a stone in Zion over which people will stumble— a large rock that will make them fall— and the one who believes in him will never be ashamed."

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

- "...WHO" - here Paul maintains Isaiah's more general wording, with "who" referring to those elected by God

— The Jews' past pursuit of righteousness through their own works caused them to miss Christ's presence among them. To prove this point, Paul combines two verses from Isaiah (Paul doesn't quote exactly; he takes the first and last part of Is 28:16 and substitutes Is 8:14 for the middle):



- Is 28:16 concerning those who believe: they will not be ashamed of this doctrine of salvation. The Remnant did not stumble over Jesus. For the Jewish believer, Jesus is not the Stone of Stumbling nor the Rock of Offense. He is a "sanctuary" (Is 8:14) and "the preciousness" (1 Peter 2:1-10).
  - Is 8:14, which confirms the two-fold attitude of both stumbling and rejection. God intended the Messiah to be the provider of salvation, however the Jews did not allow Him to fulfill this function for them. Consequently, this Stone became a stumbling block for them (Cf. 1 Cor 1:23)
- Jesus' offer of salvation through faith in Him, apart from works, proved to be two things: (1) a stone of stumbling and (2) a rock of offense
- They stumbled over the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing, and they were offended by it
- "...PUT TO SHAME" - disappointed

Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ did not make God unfaithful or unrighteous in His dealings with the nation. What it did was make it possible for Gentiles to surpass the Jews as the main recipients of salvation.