

Romans 9

Research question: Does God create some people, knowing that He has not elected them to salvation, and they will therefore never be saved?

I. Paul's Anguish for the Jews to be Saved- vs. 1-5

9 *I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

1. Paul affirms his love for Israel- vs. 1-3
 - a. *I speak the truth in Christ.*
 - b. *I am not lying.*
 - c. *My conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit.*
2. If Paul could give up his salvation for Israel to be saved, he would. He can't because he is not the Savior.
3. The gifts of Israel- vs. 4-5
 - a. Adoption- The Jews were chosen in Abraham
 - b. Glory- they experienced the glory of God in the pillars of cloud and fire
 - c. Covenants- God's binding promises to Abraham, David, and the nation of Israel
 - d. Law- to show them their sin and their need for God's grace and mercy
 - e. Service of God- in the tabernacle and the temple

- f. Promises- the chosen people of God would welcome the Messiah to save the world.
- g. The Fathers- to point them to the Messiah
- h. Christ- came “to the Jew first and also to the Greek”

II. True Israel are The Elect of God- vs. 6-13

⁶But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, ⁷nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹For this is the word of promise: “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁰And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac ¹¹(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹²it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” ¹³As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

- 1. God’s Word has not failed because of Israel’s unbelief.
- 2. In Isaac your seed shall be called.
 - a. Not all of Abraham’s descendants received the promise of God.
 - b. Isaac was the son of the promise.
 - c. Ishmael was the son of Abraham’s faithlessness and sin.
- 3. Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated
 - a. The basis of God’s choice:
 - i. *The purpose of God according to election*
 - ii. *Him who calls*

- b. God's choice was not based on:
 - i. *Good or evil* actions by Jacob or Esau
 - ii. *Works*
- c. What does it mean that God hated Esau?
 - i. The word translated "hate" is *miseo*.
 - ii. Its use elsewhere in the New Testament gives us hints about its meaning.
 - 1. Luke 14:26- "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."
 - 2. Matthew 6:24- "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."
 - iii. *Miseo* does not simply mean "to hate", it can also mean "to love less than another."
 - iv. Thayer's Greek Lexicon definition: "the signification to love less, to postpone in love or esteem, to slight, through oversight"
- d. Thus, it is not correct to say that God hated Esau in the sense that we use the word "hate", but it is correct to say that God chose Jacob and not Esau.

III. God's Mercy and Justice- vs. 14-18

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!* ¹⁵ *For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."* ¹⁶ *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows*

mercy. ¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”* ¹⁸ *Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

1. *What shall we say then?*- what should a Christian do with this information?
2. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* Has He wronged Esau?- Certainly not?
3. God's mercy is His prerogative.
4. God's mercy is not based on:
 - a. *him who wills*- human will
 - b. *nor of him who runs*- human works
5. Example: Pharaoh
 - a. *For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you*- God raised up Pharaoh so that He could bring judgment on him to deliver Israel.
 - b. *That My name may be declared in all the earth*- God's glory is His greatest goal. This is not narcissism. God is the greatest Being in existence. If He glorified anything else, He would be foolish.
6. Therefore: Paul's (initial) answer to his question *what shall we say then?*
 - a. He has mercy on whom He wills
 - b. Whom He wills He hardens
7. God's role in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:
 - a. Exodus 7:13- Pharaoh hardens his heart (KJV misinterprets this as “he hardened Pharaoh's heart”, where the same expression is used elsewhere as “his heart was hardened”.)

- b. Exodus 7:22- “*Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.*”
- c. Exodus 8:15- “*But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.*”
- d. Exodus 8:19- “*Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.*”
- e. Exodus 8:32- “*But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.*”
- f. Exodus 9:7- “*Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.*”
- g. Exodus 9:12- “*But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.*”
- h. Exodus 10:1- “*Now the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him...”*”
- i. Exodus 10:20, 10:27, 11:10, 14:8- God hardens Pharaoh’s heart.

8. Pharaoh hardened his heart, then God hardened his heart. God confirmed Pharaoh in his own decisions.

- a. Romans 1:28- “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind...*”

IV. A Difficult Question: Why Does God Punish People if He did not Elect them for Salvation?- vs. 19-21

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

1. Question: “*Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?*”
 - a. Why does God punish people for their sins if He did not elect them for salvation?
 - i. Why would God punish Esau if He hated him from the womb?
 - ii. Why would God punish Pharaoh if He hardened his heart?
2. Paul’s unsatisfying answer: Who do you think you are?
 - a. *Who are you to reply against God?* - asking the question is fine, but defying God because of His sense of justice is sinful.
 - b. *Why have you made me like this?* – accepting God’s sovereignty means that we do not challenge Him for enacting His will.
 - c. *Does not the potter have power over the clay?* - God has the authority to do what He will with what He has made.
 - i. Adam was created from the dust of the earth.
 - ii. We are the clay and He is the Potter.
 - d. *From the same lump* - from the common humanity of all people
 - e. *One vessel for honor and another for dishonor* - literally, one for special use and one for common use.

V. Vessels of Wrath and Vessels of Mercy- vs. 22-29

²² *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

²⁵ *As He says also in Hosea:*

*"I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved."*

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

²⁷ *Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:*

*"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
The remnant will be saved.*

²⁸ *For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness,
Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth."*

²⁹ *And as Isaiah said before:*

*"Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed,
We would have become like Sodom,
And we would have been made like Gomorrah."*

1. God's motives in election: *What if God, wanting:*

- a. *To show His wrath-* His righteous judgment for sin
- b. *And make His power known-* to glorify Himself by demonstrating His power.

2. Endured with longsuffering- God has been patient and just with everyone.

- a. Jesus said in Matthew 5:45- *for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*
- b. God has given every opportunity for sinners to repent.

3. *That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of His mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory*

- a. God judges sinners to show the saints what He has saved them from.

4. *Even us whom He called*- Romans 8:29-30: the elect are foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

a. *Not of the Jews only*- some of the elect are Jews

b. *But also of the Gentiles*- some of the elect are Gentiles

5. Hosea 2:23

a. God calls people His own, who were not His own

b. God calls people beloved who were not beloved

c. People who were not His people are called sons (and daughters) of the living God.

6. Isaiah 10:22-23

a. Israel is innumerable, but not all will be saved. Only a remnant.

b. *He will finish the work*- God will accomplish His purpose.

c. *In righteousness*- God will accomplish His will, but not through unjust means.

7. Isaiah 1:9

a. Would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah- except for the grace of God, all humanity would descend into sin.

VI. Conclusion: Righteousness by Faith for all who believe in Christ- vs. 30-33

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written:*

*“Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”*

1. *Did not pursue righteousness*- humanity, if left to itself, will not pursue God.
2. *Have attained to righteousness*- God has given righteousness to those who did not seek it.
3. *Even the righteousness of faith*- true righteousness which the law could never give.
4. *Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness*
 - a. Israel pursued salvation through obedience to the law, but it could never make them righteous.
5. *Why? Because they did not seek it by faith... but by works of the law*- only faith in Christ can save. No obedience can bring about forgiveness of sin.
6. *Stumbling stone*-
 - a. Isaiah 8:14- God lays a stumbling stone in Zion
 - b. Isaiah 28:16-
 - i. *Whoever*- all who believe in Christ will be saved
 - ii. *Not put to shame*- God will glorify those who believe in Him.

Application:

1. This text is one part of a larger biblical discussion about election and free will. It is powerful and decisive text, but it does not exhaust what the Bible says about these subjects.

2. Romans 10 follows this text, and contains the following truths about salvation:
 - a. Verse 9: “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - b. Verse 11: “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”
 - c. Verse 13: “For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”
 - d. Verse 17: “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
3. We cannot know who is saved and who is not.
4. I Corinthians 3:10-15

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- a. The foundation is Jesus Christ. There is salvation in no other.
- b. One can build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with:
 - i. Righteousness- gold, silver, precious stones

ii. Temporal works- wood, hay, straw

- c. Judgment Day will reveal the nature of our works
- d. There is a reward for righteous deeds done in faith.
- e. Temporal works will burn away, but salvation will not be lost.

Final Word: According to Romans 9, God has chosen some people for salvation (“vessels of mercy”) and some for damnation (“vessels of wrath”).

Some sinners receive mercy from God.

Some sinners receive justice from God.

No one receives injustice from God.

Everyone in hell deserves to be there.

No one in heaven deserves to be there.