

Romans 9:1-13  
The Precision of God's Word

**Introduction:** Sadly, throughout the years, many people, including some Christians, have had a hatred for the Jewish people. If not as intense as hatred, at least there has been a deliberate disregard of, or bigotry toward, the Jewish people.

We need to remember that we are saved by a Jewish Savior, we possess the gospel from the Jewish Scriptures, as well as mostly Jewish writers in the New Testament. Further, the first church at Jerusalem was predominantly Jewish, as were all of the twelve apostles, while Paul continued to call himself a Jew. (Horner)

J. Vernon McGee pointed out: "The first eight chapters of Romans emphasize *faith*. Chapters 9—11 emphasize *hope*. Chapters 12—16 emphasize *love*."

**1) Paul's love is noted in his intense distress for Israel—9:1-5**

- Note the obvious shift from celebration to lamentation between Rom. 8 & 9. (Moo) This section describes the terrible plight of unbelieving Israel. They are the ones who stand accursed, separate from Christ.
- Remember that the church in Rome was predominantly Gentile.
- a) His oath—9:1 <sup>1</sup> *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—*
  - i) "Conscience" in Paul is the fallible inborn faculty that monitors a person's conformity to a moral standard. (Moo)
- b) His intense and incessant emotional anguish—9:2 <sup>2</sup> *that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.*
  - i) Paul had been accused of being anti-Jewish because of his apostleship to the Gentiles. This should dispel any such thought.
  - ii) The Jewish leadership has hated Paul for quite some time. Remember Acts 9:23; 13:45; 21:27; 23:12; 26:11, etc.
- c) His reason for his distress—9:3 <sup>3</sup> *For [ga,r] I could wish/pray [eu;comai] that I myself were accursed [avna,qema] and cut off from (the) Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*
  - i) This is similar to Moses in Ex. 32:32. But, wait! This can't happen, in light of Rom. 8:31-39. This statement greatly disturbed the Puritans.
- d) His evaluation—9:4-5
  - i) Their ethnicity: <sup>4</sup> *They are Israelites,*
    - (1) This term is NEVER used for the church.
  - ii) Their six privileges: *and to them belong* (note singular, singular, plural)
    - (1) Group one:
      - (a) The family of God: *the adoption* [ui`oqesi,a]
        - (i) Adoption of Israel as a nation
      - (b) The presence of God: *the glory*
      - (c) The irrevocable agreements of God: *the covenants,*
        - (i) NOT the alleged covenant of grace, but the covenants (plural) related to Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Covenant.

- (2) Group two:
  - (a) The revelation of God: *the giving of the law* [nomoqesi,a]
  - (b) The tabernacle/temple worship of God: *the worship* [latrei,a]
  - (c) The blessings of God: *and the promises*.
- iii) Their forefathers: <sup>5</sup> *To them belong the patriarchs,*
- iv) Their Divine Messiah:
  - (1) His humanity: *and from [evk] their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ,*
  - (2) His deity: *who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*
    - (a) This is a very clear statement of Jesus being God.

## 2) Paul is confident in the precise distinctions in God's Word concerning His sovereign choice—9:6-13

- a) It is trustworthy—9:6a <sup>6</sup> *But it is not as though the word of God has failed.*
  - i) The OT promises God made to the patriarchs have not run aground or been blown off course.
- b) Why is it trustworthy?—9:6b-13
  - i) The reason: *For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,*
    - (1) This does NOT say or mean that the church in any way replaces Israel.
  - ii) The truth of distinction illustrated with Isaac and Ishmael—9:7-9
    - (1) Distinction observed from the Law (Gen. 21:12): <sup>7</sup> *and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."*
    - (2) The explanation of distinction: <sup>8</sup> *This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.*
    - (3) An additional quote from the Law (Gen. 18:10, 14): <sup>9</sup> *For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son."*
      - (a) God chose to bless Isaac before his birth, not after.
      - (4) THE POINT: even though they have the same physical father, they are not equally chosen of God to fulfill His purpose.
  - iii) The truth of distinction illustrated with Jacob and Esau—9:10-13
    - (1) From the Law (Gen. 25:21, 23): <sup>10</sup> *And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— <sup>12</sup> she was told, "The older will serve the younger."*
      - (a) God is not dependent on mankind to do something so that He might choose them.
      - (b) God is the source of salvation, not people. The call of God is that effective summons by which people are brought into relationship with Him.

- (c) God is sovereign and acts independently of mankind. This rejects those who argue for God pre-knowing man's faith being the basis of God's election.
- (2) From the Prophets (Mal. 1:2-3): <sup>13</sup> *As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated/rejected."*
  - (a) Jacob's preeminence was the result of God's love for him. Esau's servitude was the result of God's hatred for/rejection of him.
  - (b) "As to 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,' a woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, 'I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.' 'That,' Spurgeon replied, 'is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob!'"
- (1) THE POINT: Even though Jacob & Esau shared the same father, the same conception, the same womb, the same condition (unborn), and the same inactivity, God was free to choose Jacob over Esau because God was pleased to do so to accomplish His purpose.

**3) Things we need to remember:**

- b) True Israel consists only of the ethnic descendants of Abraham who have embraced Jesus as Messiah.
- c) God sovereignly selected individuals to be included in His covenant.
  - i) In the final analysis the reason why some people are accepted and others rejected is that God so willed it. The divine, sovereign will is the source of both election and reprobation. Human *responsibility* is not canceled, but there is no such thing as human *merit*. God's eternal purpose is not ultimately based on human works. (William Hendriksen)
- d) God's promises, either to the Jewish nation or to the NT church, will stand and be accomplished because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and His Word cannot be broken (Psalm 119:89), regardless of what our emotions may tell us.

Romans 9:14-24  
The Freedom of God

**Introduction:** Have you, or someone you have talked to, ever accused God of being unfair, an arbitrary despot, or somehow self-contradicting? In choosing Jacob, was God unfair to Esau? As Ken Boa points out: Interestingly, the first time Paul was accused of making God unjust for condemning sinners (Rom. 3:5), and now he is accused of making God unjust for saving sinners (Rom. 9:14)!

It is not easy for people to understand and appreciate the fact that God operates in sovereign and distinguishing grace in his dealings with us. (SLJ)

**1) Describing God's freedom:**

- a) Freedom means that God is wholly self-determined. He is not bound by anything outside of Himself. He is independent of all that He created. God is only self-limited by His own will and nature, which implies that while free, there are things which God cannot do. (McCune)
- b) Finally, God's freedom contrasts with fatalism, pantheism, and neo-orthodoxy. **Fatalism** holds that things happen by chance or are determined by fate. **Pantheism** says that God is locked into this world. And, **neo-orthodoxy** says that God's freedom is absolute, in the sense that He can turn into the opposite of Himself or that He can change His decree of election into reprobation. The neo-orthodox suggest that if God cannot do these things, then He is not truly free. However, self-determination does not demand the possibility of self-destruction. (McCune)

**2) The application of God's freedom—9:14-15**

- a) Questions asked
  - i) <sup>14</sup> *What shall we say then?*  
(1) Because we are God's children by **His** choice, not our works or merit.
  - ii) Assumed "No" response: *Is there injustice [avdiki,a] on God's part?*  
(1) God would be perfectly just to condemn every person and save no one. (Moody)
- b) Questions answered
  - i) An emphatic denial: *By no means!*
  - ii) A scriptural denial (Ex. 33:19): <sup>15</sup> *For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy [evlee,w] on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion [oivkti,rw] on whom I have compassion."*  
(1) Israel, in rebellion against God at Mt. Sinai, was not worthy of God's mercy and compassion. They deserved to be destroyed.  
(2) God is not unrighteous because it is not a matter of justice or debt for the One showing mercy, nor of the desire, effort, or merit of the one seeking mercy. (MaGill)
- a) **THE POINT:** Mercy is God's choice to make. God gives gifts of mercy as He chooses, as He thinks best and right. He owes it to know one. (MaGill)

## 2) Principles of God's freedom from the OT—9:16-18

- a) Principle # 1—9:16 <sup>16</sup> *So then ...*
  - i) Stated negatively: *it* (i.e. the showing of mercy) *depends not on human will/lit. "willing" [qe,lw] or exertion/lit. "running" [tre,cw]*,
  - ii) Stated positively: *but on God, who has mercy [evlea,w]*.
- b) OT quote (Ex. 9:16)—9:17
  - i) <sup>17</sup> *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show [evndei,knumi] my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed [diagge,llw] in all the earth."*
    - (1) God's power demonstrated toward Israel in rescuing them.
    - (2) God's power demonstrated toward Egypt in punishing them.
- c) Principle # 2—9:18 <sup>18</sup> *So then ...*
  - i) Stated positively: *he has mercy [evlee,w] on whomever he wills [qe,lw]*,
  - ii) Stated negatively: *and he hardens whomever he wills [qe,lw]*.
    - (1) What do it mean for God to harden someone? God's hardening, then, is an action that renders a person insensitive to God and his word and that, if not reversed, culminates in eternal damnation. ... God's hardening does not, then, *cause* spiritual insensitivity to the things of God; it maintains people in the state of sin that already characterizes them. (D. Moo)
- d) **THE POINT:** God's choice to harden instead of show mercy is also His to make. God is not unrighteous to harden because all punishment for sin is earned and deserved, just as all mercy is undeserved. (MaGill)

## 3) Objections to God's freedom anticipated and answers—9:19-24

- a) The objections anticipated—9:19 <sup>19</sup> *You will say to me then,*
  - Because God is free to show mercy or to harden whom He chooses.
  - i) *"Why does he still find fault [me,mfomai]?"*
  - ii) *For who can (successfully) resist [pf. act. ind. avnqi,sthmi] his will [bou,lhma]?"*
- b) The correction accomplished through a series of questions—9:20-24
  - Similar in argument to Isaiah 29:16 & 45:9.
  - i) The impudence of humanity—9:20a <sup>20</sup> *But who are **you** (emphatic), O man, to answer back to (contradict) God?*
    - (1) You wouldn't even exist apart from God's work.
  - ii) Assumed "No" answer (Is. 29:16)—9:20b *Will what is molded [pla,sma] say to its molder [pla,ssw], "Why have you made me like this?"*
  - iii) Assumed "Yes" answer; the freedom of the Potter—9:21 <sup>21</sup> *Has the potter [kerameu,j] no right/authority [evxousi,a] over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?*
  - iv) The self-referential activity of God—9:22-24
    - (1) <sup>22</sup> *What if God, desiring [qe,lw] to show [evndei,knumi] his wrath and to make known [gnwri,zw] his power,*

- (a) God's powerful wrath: *has endured with much patience*  
[makroqumi,a] *vessels of wrath prepared* [pf. pass. ptc. katarti,zw] *for destruction,*
  - (i) While it is unlikely that a potter would make a pot just to destroy it, the potter still has the right to do so if he wishes.  
(Faithlife Study Bible)
  - (ii) God did not have to deliver Abraham from bowing down before the moon god Nannar. (SLJ)
- (b) God's powerful mercy: <sup>23</sup> *in order to make known* [gnwri,zw] *the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy* [e;leoj], *which he has prepared beforehand* [proetoima,zw] *for glory—* <sup>24</sup> *even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?*
- (2) It is impossible to appreciate God's saving grace unless it is seen against the sobering backdrop of His judgment. (Moody)
- c) **THE POINT:** God is free to do as He knows best.

**4) Things we need to remember:**

- a) We should never attempt to judge God. He cannot be accurately judged by anything beyond his own nature as revealed in Scripture. (D. Moo)
- b) We should never attempt to judge God. We will forever exist as the creature before the Creator.

Romans 9:25-33  
The Future Conversion of Israel

**Introduction:** In this section, God reveals through Paul that God's election of Israel (9:6-13) is certain because of the guaranteed future conversion of the nation. Earlier in 9:6-13 Paul had made use of the Law. Now he utilizes the Prophets and the Writings.

**1) Paul teaches about Israel's future conversion from Hosea—9:25-26**

- a) From Hos. 2:23: <sup>25</sup> *As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"*
- b) From Hos. 1:10: <sup>26</sup> *"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*
- c) THE POINT:
  - i) **Negatively:** God is not revealing that the church fulfills God's promises to Israel or that the church is the new Israel.
  - ii) **Positively:** This shows God's grace and mercy toward formerly unrepentant Israel. The original context is the rebellious northern ten tribes.

**2) Paul teaches about Israel's future conversion from Isaiah—9:27-29**

- a) Evidence of God's persistent faithfulness from Is. 10:22-23: <sup>27</sup> *And Isaiah (passionately) cries out [kra,zw] concerning [u`pe,r] Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully [suntele,w] and without delay [sunte,mnw]."*
- b) Evidence of God's powerful mercy from Is. 1:9: <sup>29</sup> *And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah." (Gen. 18-19)*
  - i) Their idolatry deserved God's judgment, not His mercy.
- c) THE POINT: Israel was wrong to depend on their race instead of God's grace to be acceptable before God. This will be applied to only a remnant of the nation.

**3) Paul teaches about Israel's conversion from Isaiah and the Psalms—9:30-33**

- a) The application: <sup>30</sup> *What shall we say, then?*
- b) The contrast:
  - i) The nations: *That Gentiles who did not pursue [pres. act. ptc. diw,kw] righteousness have attained [katalamba,nw] it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;*
  - ii) The nation: <sup>31</sup> *but that Israel who pursued [pres. act. ptc. diw,kw] a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching [fqa,nw] that law.*

- (1) Israel's lack of faith: <sup>32</sup> *Why? Because they did not pursue it by [evk] faith, but as if it were based on [evk] works.*
  - (a) Literally: "Why? Because not by faith but as though by works."
  - (b) In other words, they did not pursue the wrong thing; they simply pursued it in the wrong way and for the wrong motive.
- (2) Israel's two-fold response to Christ: *They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, (Is. 28:16; 8:14) <sup>33</sup> as it is written, "BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION (in Jerusalem, in spite of its rejection of the Messiah)*
  - (a) Some rejected Christ: *A STONE OF STUMBLING, AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE;*
    - (i) Jesus did not meet the expectations of Jewish leadership.
  - (b) Some trusted Christ: *AND WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.*" (Ps. 118:22)
    - (i) Christ alone is worthy of our trust.
- c) THE POINT: Israel thought they could somehow earn favor with God, rather than depend on Someone to provide it for them. To remain unrepentant and to reject God's grace is to choose His complete and final judgment instead.

**4) Things we need to remember:**

- a) How deeply ingrained is our rebellious self-esteem! Too proud to accept God's willingness to forgive, sinners stumble headlong into eternity with their stubborn sinfulness intact. (R. Mounce)
- b) Unless God takes the initiative, calls us, and extends mercy; we cannot be saved.