

God shows mercy and elects those who will be his very own

Lesson One +++ Romans 9:1-29

CONTEXT

In chapter 8 Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that nothing can separate them from God's love. Christians will rest secure knowing that they are the objects of God's loving care, chosen by him from eternity for eternal life.

As comforting as that truth was for Paul's readers, it raised some questions. Paul's audience was a mix of Jews and Gentiles. The church was growing through an addition of Gentile converts. The Jews for the most part stood opposed to the Christian church, sticking to their belief in righteousness by observing the law. But if the Jews rejected Christ and remained, in large, outside of the Christian church and its blessings, what about their status as God's chosen people? What about all of the promises God made to them in the Old Testament? Paul addresses those questions in chapters 9-11.

OVERVIEW

Rom 9 In mercy God chose some Jews and some Gentiles to be his people.

Rom 10 In mercy God provided salvation freely for Jew and Gentile by faith, but the Jews rejected this free gift.

Rom 11 In mercy God used the fact that Gentiles accepted this free gift to lead some envious Jews to accept it also.

INTRODUCTION

- Use the word "election" in a sentence.
 - Use the word "elect" in a sentence.
 - What is "mercy"? Use the word "mercy" in a sentence.
 - What connection is there between an "election" and "mercy"?
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9:1-4a Paul grieved for the Jews who are lost. How great was Paul's grief?

- ✓ v 3 ηὐχόμενον = imperfect indicative, 1st person singular "I kept praying"
- ✓ Why was this a remarkable prayer?
 - ✓ *He continued to pray for his kinsmen who treated him so poorly on his missionary journeys. He continued to pray that he might be cut off from God, eternally lost, so that his people, the people of Israel might be saved.*
 - ✓ *Ex 32:7-14,30-33. When Israel worshiped the golden calf and God told Moses that he would destroy them and make a great nation of him, Moses offered to be damned himself, if only that God might spare the Israelites.*
 - ✓ *Ex 32:31 -- "Please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."*
 - ✓ *The cause of his deep grief is that the Israelites, his own kinsmen, were zealous for God and for righteousness, but that they sought to go about it the wrong way, through works and not*

through faith. It grieved him that they had so much, especially the promises, and yet pursued righteousness by works and not by faith. Think about the friend, relative, neighbor, acquaintance who is Mormon, Muslim, a practicing Roman Catholic, who is zealous in their “spirituality and religion” and your heart aches for their salvation because they are seeking righteousness through works and not by faith in Christ alone.

- ✓ *The fervor that our culture seems to commend in every religion except genuine Christianity causes the Lord and his ambassador deep grief. Talk about a challenge to the Christian! He dare not conceal his anguish over those who are striving for a righteousness that cannot possibly be gained from even pious-looking efforts of the law.*

9:4b-5 For many centuries God had showered the Jews with eight wonderful blessings. List them here.

- 1) v 4 -- *the adoption – out of all the nations of the earth it was only the Israelites that God said, “When Israel was a child, I love him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11.1)*
- 2) v 4 -- *the glory – the unique phenomenon that God used to display his presence in the Old Testament (Leviticus 9)*
- 3) v 4 -- *the covenants – Abraham (Gen 15.17,18); Moses (Ex 19.5,6); David (2Samuel 7.8-16); Jeremiah (31.31-40); Ezekiel (34.25-31)*
- 4) v 4 -- *the lawgiving – Israel knew exactly what God expected of them, 10Commandments from Mt Sinai*
- 5) v 4 -- *spiritual worship, religious service – they had the only God-pleasing worship, and their worship pointed them to Christ*
- 6) v 4 -- *the promises*
- 7) v 5 -- *the fathers, patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, Solomon*
- 8) v 5 -- *the Christ according to the flesh; ancestry, lineage – they were bearers of the promised seed*

SUMMARY of 9:1-5: Paul was not biased against the Jews. Neither was God. Far from it! Of all the nations in the history of the world, the Jews have had the premier position and blessings.

LOOKING AHEAD to 9:6-29: Belonging to God’s true spiritual people has always been because of God’s gracious calling, never because of ethnic identity. This fact is firmly rooted in the Old Testament. At that time God was free to choose some physical Jews to be saved, and he was also free to choose some Gentiles to be saved.

9:6 Who was “Israel” and how did he get that name?

Jacob – Genesis 32:22-32

- ✓ Compare:

In our day, all who are descended from Christians are not Christians.

In Paul’s day, all who were descended from Israel were not Israel.

“descended from Israel,” that is, from Jacob “are not Israel” spiritual Israel, believers in Christ Jesus

9:6-9 NOTICE: God did not say that all of Abraham's descendants would be his special people Israel.

- ✓ What "natural child" did Abraham have who was not one of the "children of the promise"? See Genesis 16 and Genesis 25:1-6.

Ishmael was born from Abraham, so were other children, see Genesis 25:1-6

- ✓ Verses 6b-9 explains verse 6a. In short, what counts is grace, not race!
 - ✓ *What a great point to keep in mind in Christian living, "grace not race." It's so easy for us who have been to all the special worship services, received the promise through the Sacrament often, have parents and relatives who were 'good church going people', etc. to put our confidence in our race/works. We were chosen for no other reason than God's grace. That's where we need to rest our faith.*
 - ✓ *I've often squirmed a bit at the "you must be Lutheran" humor that tweaks us because we all supposedly share a certain emotional reserve, love potlucks with casseroles, appreciate the German (or Norwegian) hymns the most, have seen the old black-and-white Luther movie ten times, wouldn't think of laughing out loud during a worship service, etc. I do "get" the humor and realize it should never be taken too seriously. Yet if I'm the one who passes it along, have I in some subtle way still given the impression that perhaps our relationship with God does have something to do with northern European ancestry?*

9:10-13 Remember that Abraham's son Isaac married Rebekah, and God blessed them with twin sons Esau and Jacob.

- ✓ Three facts about Jacob and Esau underscore the fact that God's election is a matter of God's mercy.
 1. Jacob and Esau (unlike Ishmael) shared one and the same father and mother (v 10).
 2. God promised that Jacob would be preeminent even before the twins were born (v 11). So Jacob did nothing that caused God to give him preference over Esau.
 3. Jacob was the younger of the two (v 12). Human preferences have nothing to do with God's choice!
- ✓ 9:13 "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (*A quote from Malachi 1:1-3*)
 - In his mercy for Jesus' sake God loves sinners and makes them his children. So he loved Jacob/Israel.
 - In his justice God is rightly angry with sinners and rejects them. So he hated Esau.
 - *"God loves the sinners but hates the sin?" I don't think so. God is very clear that he hates sin and the sinner.*
 - *Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:3; Psalm 5:5*
 - *And yet he is the same God who says – look up Ezekiel 33.11, Romans 5.8*
 - *The resolution to this seeming paradox is found at the cross*
 - *Paul chooses to use the name "Jacob". Jacob lived up to that name "Heel-grabber" or "Con-man." Scripture is careful to record his self-reliant plans. I cringe at the sight of Jacob tricking his own blind father. I know that my sinful flesh is capable of anything and should not be thinking I could never do that, but Jacob doing that to Isaac is one time that I do think I could never do that if my father were blind. That name brings all the terrible things that Jacob did to mind. Paul puts that first, rather than Esau. The first amazing thing is not that God hated Esau. That's what should be. We are by nature sinful and show that nature by doing terrible things, all which call for wrath. That's to be expected in*

connection to justice. Paul puts the most amazing thing first - God loved the likes of Jacob. God is the one "who justifies the wicked." (Rom. 4:5) Abram had his deeds recorded to show he was amongst the wicked. So also Jacob had his wicked deeds recorded and was amongst the wicked. I should have a greater problem with hearing that God loved Jacob than that he hated Esau.

- *I could explain from the Old Testament that "God make his face shine upon you" is a hiphil. (Numbers 6:25) The automatic thing is that God sees our sin and his face is angry, dark set against us. But he makes himself look at his Son and how, before the New Testament, his Son was going to live a perfect life for him, and take the punishment for him. Now when God sees our sin, his face is in the same way set against us, but he causes himself to see the wounds that his Son bears as evidence that his wrath is already poured out on our sin, and his smile is upon us. Christ's record of perfection is cast over us, and when God sees perfection, he smiles. He smiles over us or makes his face shine upon Jacob because he sees Christ and his perfection covering Jacob. We should have a greater problem with God smiling upon Jacob and us rather than hating Esau. But those who know they are wicked know that they have a need for a Savior. God at the same time hates the sinner and loves the sinner. The cross resolves that paradox.*

- God is showing how election is based on his mercy, he freely chose Isaac and Jacob to further his purpose, to bless all the families of the earth.

- something else to note about Ishmael and Esau: they both received blessings from God (Genesis 17.20; 21.13)

- ✓ TAKE NOTE: The Holy Spirit says nothing about faith here. In other words, Paul did *not* write, "God chose Jacob and rejected Esau because God took into account the faith of Jacob and the unbelief of Esau."
 - In fact, faith is excluded when Paul points out that God's purpose was accomplished "in keeping with election ... by the one who calls" (vs 11b-12a).
 - St. Augustine (d.430 A.D.): "God does not choose us because we believe but in order that we may believe."

- ✓ MAJOR POINT #1: The election of Israel as God's chosen nation was entirely an act of God's mercy.

LOOKING AHEAD to 9:14-23: Paul takes a "detour" so as to deal with objections that may disturb his readers.

- ✓ The standard objection = If God decides whom he will choose and does so apart from anything in those he chooses, how can he be "righteous" or "just"?

9:14-18 When no one has earned anything and when God then gives more to some than to others, no one should complain that God has been unfair.

- ✓ v. 17 Pharaoh rejected God's revelation that he is the true God. Eventually God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7.22; 8.15,19,32; 9.7,12,34-35; 10.20,27; 11.10) -- for two purposes:

✓ Notice first in these passages from Exodus that Pharaoh hardened his heart, that was his will, to oppose the Almighty, living God. Eventually God made that his will by hardening his heart, locked him up in his sin.

a) **that I might display my power in you**

- God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt was a display of his power, intended to win over the hearts of his people

b) **that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth**

By Pharaoh hardening his heart, he gave the Lord the opportunity to display his power and grace.

Pharaoh made it possible for the LORD to proclaim his name in the whole earth. Then, the nations that the Israelites encountered on their way to the Promised Land had heard what God had done to Egypt. Today, people still read this story.

These words come shortly after Aaron and Israel made the golden calf and Moses asked God his name be blotted out of the book of life (blot out his election!) to save Israel. Before they leave Sinai though, Moses wants to know if God will go with them or who he will send. He wants the LORD. And the LORD tells Moses he will go with them and will have mercy and compassion on them. That is his nature and character. He decided to that from eternity, before any evil or good was done.

God's choice of election is his, on the basis of his mercy and compassion. "He will give grace both for a time and in keeping with my purpose on whom I have had mercy, I have from eternity determined to give grace, and I will have compassion, and I will pardon or remit sins in time and in keeping with my purpose, on whom I will have compassion, from eternity I have remitted and pardoned." (LW Vol 25, St. Louis) Election is based purely on the mercy and compassion of God and then also the way that he goes about accomplishing that election, through the merciful, compassionate gift of his Son.

9:18a "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy." This is called God's *antecedent* will. God our Savior's most basic desire *ahead of all other desires* that he "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4).

9:18b "and he hardens whom he wants to harden." This is called God's *consequent* will. In other words, *following upon* the sinner's rebellion against God, God may choose to confirm the sinner's hardened heart and condemn him to eternal punishment.

9:19-21 Some will say, "It's God's fault!" They will fault God for blaming them for their own rebellion.

✓ v 20 How dare people talk about God like that!

✓ v 21 Would a lump of clay ever talk back to the potter who formed it?!

9:22-24 No one can complain about God's mercy! After all, in his mercy God showed great patience with those who rejected him and were ripe for destruction. This demonstrates all the more the rich mercy that he showed to us whom he elected and called to faith. Explain.

- ✓ 9:22 *κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν* Translating the Greek at the end of this verse as “*prepared for destruction*” is a poor decision.
 - God has never *prepared* anyone for damnation in hell, as though that was his desire all along. Remember that it is God’s *antecedent* will to save all people.
 - Yet when some have refused his Christ, by their own doing they outfitted themselves for the *consequent* will of God -- that he must then punish sinners.
 - Better translation: “...bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – they have made themselves ripe for destruction.”

Is God blameworthy if with great patience he puts up with objects that are under his wrath, that is, people who by their unbelief and rejection of him are fit for destruction, even though it is his consequent will to show righteous wrath against such people and to make his power known?

And is it wrong if he acts in such a way as to make known the greatness of his glory to the objects of his mercy, people whom he by an act of his own will (James 1.18) has previously – in fact, from eternity (Ephesians 1.4) – prepared for glory?

When I speak of “objects of mercy” I’m referring to us, the ones who are righteous by faith in Christ (9.30,31), the true Israel, whom he has called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles.

- ✓ MAJOR POINT #2: God is not wrong in showing mercy to whomever he chooses.

9:25-26 In the Old Testament the Gentiles were not part of God’s people. They were foreign to God. For the most part they were ignorant of God’s promises to save sinners. But in the New Testament God in mercy has now chosen some Gentiles to believe and belong to his people!

- ✓ The prophet Hosea served as the Lord’s mouthpiece about 800 years before Paul wrote this epistle.

Vs25 Hosea 2.23

Vs26 Hosea 1.10

9:27-29 Meanwhile, God brought his judgment on the Israelites for rejecting the Savior. Tragic as that is, at the same time a remnant of Israel believed and was not destroyed.

- ✓ v 27 Recall God’s promise to Abraham: “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore” (Gen 22:17a).
- ✓ Also recall Rom 4:16-17 -- “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. 17 As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.”

Vs27-28 Isaiah 10.22-23

Vs29 Isaiah 1.9

9:29 To what do Paul and Isaiah compare the sentence God carried out against those who hardened their hearts against the Christ?

Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 19.24-29

- ✓ MAJOR POINT #3: God’s mercy is surprising. He chose a remnant of the Jews to be saved. He also chose many Gentiles.
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CLOSING

- Why does Paul stress that our election is an act of God’s mercy?
- What’s wrong with this statement? “The Jews and Gentiles who believed at Paul’s time were just plain lucky that God chose them to be his people. In the same way it is just pure luck that any of us believes in Jesus as our Savior.”

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!
Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?
Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay him?
For from him and through him and to him are all things.
To him be the glory forever! Amen. (*Romans 11:33-36, NIV84*)