

Romans 9

Good morning and thank you for joining us. You have lots of choices of places in which to fellowship, and we're grateful you're here with us. Would you please turn in your bibles to Romans 9?

Well, this morning we study one of the most challenging chapters in all of the bible, because Romans 9 focuses on the sovereignty of God.

I've felt an impending weight for many weeks with Romans 9 looming in the distance, knowing I would one day soon teach this difficult chapter. And after really just wrestling the scriptures all week, on Friday a weight was lifted.

I'm studying Hebrews in my personal time, and about 10 times in Hebrews it mentions the word rest. In fact nearly 400 times in the bible is the term rest used. And yesterday at the MPB the word rest was emphasized.

See God had to remind me that it's not my responsibility to try and convince any person listening of anything that is taught here. My responsibility is to share the what the Word has to say, and allow God the HS to do His work in your heart. And I can't tell you I had such peace after that.

Coming on the heels of Romans 8, where we just saw how nothing can anything separate us from God's love, a problematic question arises.

If God is for His elect and will never remove His love from them, then what about all the atrocities that the Jews have endured? It certainly looks as though something has separated the Jews from God's love. There's no race in history that has faced the oppression, hatred and persecution that the Jewish race has.

So how can Christians be secure in God's love and salvation when it seems that Israel seems to be rejected and cursed? Will God also reject and curse me one day?

The title of this morning's message is He is God!

Let's pray

Romans contains several OT quotations, and we'll find more than half of those OT quotes come from Romans 9, and you'll notice many of them come from Isaiah.

The next 3 chapters of Romans deal primarily with the nation of Israel. Yet you'll notice these three chapters are similar to God's dealings with individual Christians.

And it's important to remember that God chose, or God elected both the nation of Israel, and each Christian.

Romans 9 is pretty heady stuff. It features some of the most cerebral statements in all the Bible. That's why it's interesting that it begins by revealing Paul's heart

1-3

1 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^[fn] according to the flesh, Paul's love for his fellow Hebrew sound an awful lot like Moses' doesn't it? After the sin of the golden calf, Moses said...**Exodus 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! 32 Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."**

In verse 3 the word “accursed” in the original Greek is “anathema.” It means “to deliver a soul to eternal damnation.” Paul is saying he’s willing to go to hell if the Jews can go to heaven!

This is astounding when we remember that when it came to ministry, the Jews were Paul’s worst enemies. They harassed and persecuted Paul from town to town, stirring up lies and violence against him, even stoning him and leaving him for dead in Lystra. Yet Paul still loved them this passionately.

Paul reveals his heart because some may have mistakenly thought that Paul hated the Jews, since he had departed from Judaism and now preached a Law-free gospel of grace!

Let’s read verse 3-4 together

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen^[fn] 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;

After bearing his heart and declaring his anguish for the Jewish people in verses 1–3, Paul lists several advantages the Jews had, but failed to recognize as God’s chosen people.

Remember, God chose Israel to be His chosen people.

Deuteronomy 7:6 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and

redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God chose the Hebrews to be trophies of His grace. We're going to break down the advantages the Jews had as God's chosen people from verse 4

4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, The first advantage was God had graciously adopted Israel **Deuteronomy 14:2 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.**

Second...

the glory, the Israelites had the glory of God's visible presence among them, notably in the pillar of fire and the cloud **Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

Third, verse 4 gives

the covenants, The third advantage the Jews had was that God took the initiative in reaching out to Israel with covenants that bound Himself and the nation together (i.e., the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants).

Fourth-

the giving of the law, The Law was to govern the Hebrews political, social, and religious life, and guaranteed God's blessing if they obeyed.

Fifth privilege was...

the service of God, The Jewish temple service enabled Israel to have intimate fellowship with God

sixth privilege was...

and the promises; All the promises of God revealed and guaranteed God's action for the nation of Israel.

Despite all these privileges, verse 5 lists the greatest blessing given to the Jews, Jesus, who was born a Jew.

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

There's an old saying, "You don't get to pick your relatives..." And that's true, unless you're God!

Of all the nations, God chose the Jews, and Jesus was born a Jew. Yet tragically, **John 1:11 He came to His own,[fn] and His own[fn] did not receive Him.**

6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, Remember Jacob's name was changed by God to "Israel". And what does the name Israel mean-governed by God. But tragically not all of Israel was truly governed by God.

7-9

7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."[fn] **8 That 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. 9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."**[fn] Abraham had two sons. Biologically, Ishmael was his firstborn, but spiritually speaking God never recognized Ishmael. In Genesis 22, God told Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac..." God called "Isaac," Abraham's "only son."

God's people were never just about bloodline. Pedigree alone couldn't save them. And this shocked the Jews. They figured

since they were heirs of Abraham they were automatically accepted by God. Not so!

The other trait the Hebrews trusted in was their behavior. To a law abiding Jew salvation was something they could earn, and it was earned by doing good deeds. This is addressed in verses 10-12

10 And 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), 12 it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.”^[fn] Rebecca had twin boys, Jacob and Esau, and before they were even born, God chose Jacob over Esau.

Yet shockingly, as they grew into men, Jacob was more diabolical than Esau, yet God still chose Jacob.

Paul’s point is it had nothing to do with their performance, it was predetermined. The boy’s place in God’s family was a matter of “election,” or God’s choice to have Esau serve Jacob.

Prior to either child lifting a hand to prove or disprove their worthiness, God elected Jacob and rejected Esau.

13 As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

Now when we studied Genesis a few years ago we saw that God hated Esau in regard to inheriting the covenant, not in regard to blessing in this life or the next. In fact, Esau was a blessed man, but not according to the Abrahamic covenant.

A woman once said to CH 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.’

We're not able to fathom God's reasons for choosing, and they are reasons God alone knows. Look at verses 14-16...

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."^[fn] 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

So again, this brings up the challenge of man's choice and God's election. Some folks may protest and say 'well God didn't choose me'. To which the question must be-how do you know that you're not chosen.

If they say it's because I'm not a Christian, then simply ask them why don't you accept Jesus and follow Him?

It's astounding that people don't want God, yet try to find fault with God!

If you want to know if God chose you, simply trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You'll then discover that God had chosen you before you were even born.

There's never been a single person who has ever called upon the name of the Lord and been told 'sorry your name isn't on the list.'

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."^[fn]. The Pharaoh in Exodus was an example of a man God rejected. God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to bring him down, and show His great power!

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" Paul anticipates the logical

objection. How is it fair for God to harden a person's heart, like Pharaohs for example, then hold that same person accountable for their hardness?

It's important to see in the bible that God didn't override a compliant and obedient heart of Pharaoh. No, God stiffened a heart already committed to defying God. We're going to look at the scriptural proof of this

Exodus 7:13 And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

Exodus 7:23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this.

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.

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.

Exodus 8:32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

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.

FINALLY

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.

God did not harden Pharaoh's heart until Pharaoh had hardened it many times before

And so it is today...

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us,^[fn] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God will eventually confirm a person's decision to reject Him. There is a point of no return if a person continues to deny God. If a person is uncomfortable around God and wants nothing to do with God, why would God ever force them to live in His presence forever?

20-21

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? **SHOW PIC** It's important to remember that God is the potter, we are the clay, and the clay has no say! The clay has no authority to tell the potter what he can and can't do! The potter has complete mastery over the clay. **CLOSE PIC**

This can cause us to squirm in our theological seats. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is frightening, but only if we don't know the full truth.

When we realize that God is love, all fear is suddenly gone. See without the knowledge of God's love, I would resist God and His shaping and molding of my life. Only when I know that God loves me and chooses the best for me, can I yield to the master potter.

Verses 22-25 are some of the most challenging in all of the Bible.

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?

Some of you may remember the football movie named Rudy. **SHOW PIC.** It's an American classic. My favorite scene from the it is where Rudy wonders if he's prayed enough to get into Notre Dame. The old priest has some wise words...“Son, in 35 years of religious studies I've come up with only two hard incontrovertible facts, there is a God and I am not Him” **CLOSE PIC**

I would like you to hold your spot in Romans 9 and now turn to the book of Job. It's right before Psalms and after Esther. We'll be in Job 38.

After all the dialogue regarding the tragedies Job has endured...

1-18

Job 38 1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

2 “Who is this who darkens counsel

By words without knowledge?

3 Now prepare yourself like a man;

I will question you, and you shall answer Me.

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Tell Me, if you have understanding.

5 Who determined its measurements?

Surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

6 To what were its foundations fastened?

Or who laid its cornerstone,
7 When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors,
When it burst forth and issued from the womb;

9 When I made the clouds its garment,
And thick darkness its swaddling band;

10 When I fixed My limit for it,
And set bars and doors;

11 When I said,
‘This far you may come, but no farther,
And here your proud waves must stop!’

12 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
And caused the dawn to know its place,

13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
And the wicked be shaken out of it?

14 It takes on form like clay under a seal,
And stands out like a garment.

15 From the wicked their light is withheld,
And the upraised arm is broken.

16 “Have you entered the springs of the sea?

Or have you walked in search of the depths?

17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you?

Or have you seen the doors of the shadow of death?

18 Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth?

Tell Me, if you know all this.

Now go to Job 40

Job 40 1 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said:

2 “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him?

He who rebukes God, let him answer it.”

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 “Behold, I am vile;

What shall I answer You?

I lay my hand over my mouth.

5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer;

Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.”

You can turn back to Romans 9.

Folks, God does as He pleases. He answers to no one.

And we can't fully appreciate God's gift of salvation, until we have first acknowledged God's ultimate sovereignty. And granted, such supremacy is scary for us lumps of clay, if we forget the potter's hands.

But when it comes to our Potter, **SHOW PIC** we see in His hands the scars of sacrifice. The fact Jesus was willing to die for us

proves He loves us. And we can trust His hands to mold us in ways that are good, and loving, and holy. **CLOSE PIC**

So as we discussed for a little bit last week, what does the Bible actually teach? God's predestination? That my eternal destiny is decided by God, before I'm born?

Or man's free will - that every human has the responsibility to accept or reject Jesus?

The answer is yes-the Bible teaches both the election of God and human responsibility! God chose me, but it's also up to me to choose God...

In Romans 9 Paul clearly explains predestination, but in the very next chapter, **Romans 10:13** he writes, **"For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."** Which implies the choice is ours.

The Bible teaches them both! And it makes no attempt at reconciling the mystery!

It's like holding up a quarter, and asking you to describe what you see. "George Washington's head." But that's not what I see. I see "An eagle with its wings spread." Though the descriptions seem irreconcilable, the truth is we're looking at the same object, just from different angles.

This is the case with God's salvation. God commands us to choose. From our perspective it's all up to us. But once we choose, we realize before the world began God chose us. It was all about Him.

I read a quote from a man who many years ago said this regarding the doctrine of election. He said, "Long ago I settled this issue. If God didn't choose me before I was born, I'm sure He would've seen nothing in me to choose afterwards."

If God promised salvation to the Jews, and they weren't saved, how could Gentiles now be confident of God's promise? And to answer the question Paul brings up several OT passages. He begins with Hosea 2:23

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."^[fn]

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."^[fn]" God told the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, because his marriage symbolized God's relationship with Israel. The Jews were a promiscuous bride who followed idols.

"I will call them My people, who were not my people." God explained in the OT that He would adopt the Gentiles.

27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:^[fn]

"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,

The remnant will be saved. This passage quoted from Isaiah 10 speaks first to God's work in saving a remnant from the coming Assyrian destruction. The suffering of God's people at the hands of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans and others would make the Jews feel as if they would be utterly destroyed. God assured them that this was not the case. God will always preserve a remnant. This is what verses 28-29 describe

28 For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness,

Because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.”[fn]

29 And as Isaiah said before:

“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth[fn] had left us a seed,

We would have become like Sodom,

And we would have been made like Gomorrah.” Despite their wickedness, God didn’t wipe out Israel as He did the city of Sodom. God judged Israel in accordance with their failing to fulfill their side of the covenant, but in the end, a remnant always remains and one day Israel will be saved.

30-32

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.[fn]

32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.[fn] 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.”[fn]

Despite all of their advantages, the Jews tried to earn what could only be received by faith.

But the gentiles had none of these advantages. All the Gentiles had was faith.

Psalm 118 predicted the Jews would stumble over the Messiah. Rather than see Jesus as THE WAY they saw Jesus as in the way.

1 Corinthians 1: 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks[fn] foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I'm so glad I don't have everything figured out about God, because it means I'm not at the same level as God. if I were at the same level as God, then He wouldn't be God.

You know the word mystery is used 22 times in the NT. There are some things we just won't have a full comprehension of on this side of eternity. We can read and study and research all we want, but we will never attain the same level as God.

The question is, do we trust Him in all His decisions, all His ways, and in all of His will? Because He is God!?