



**Who's in Charge?
Romans 9:1-29**

In chapter nine Paul addresses an important question. If most Jews have rejected Jesus, has God's plan failed, or has He broken His promises? Paul argues because God's election of Israel did not depend on natural descent (vv.6-10) or human merit (vv.11-14), Israel's disobedience cannot nullify God's decided purpose for Israel.

God's Blessing and Election of Israel (vv. 1-13)

Paul's heart was broken over the spiritual condition of his fellow Jews. He was willing to be cut off from Christ for their sake. Although there was unbelief among the Jews, they enjoyed many spiritual blessings which Paul points out in verses 4,5. [Note the clear statement of Christ's divinity in verse 5] Paul's main point in these verses is Israel wasn't chosen by God because of their lineage from Abraham or because of their goodness but by His will. The nation of Israel came from Jacob. God chose Isaac over Ishmael (although they were both Abraham's sons.) and God chose Jacob over Esau (although they were both Isaac's sons). Therefore, as Paul wrote, "not all who are descended from Israel are Israel."

We must acknowledge that every blessing we have in an undeserved gift of God's grace. Therefore, we should be humble and thankful.

Is God Unjust? (vv. 14-18)

The fact God chooses some for His blessing means He doesn't choose others. This leads to an obvious question – Is God Just? The reality is all of us deserve God's wrath because we are sinners. Since God is the creator and sovereign, He has the right to choose on whom He has mercy and compassion. Paul used the examples of the rebelling Israelites and Pharaoh. When the Israelites sinned and worshiped the golden calf, all deserved to die, but God merciful killed only 3,000. In Pharaoh's case, Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, but God was merciful to Pharaoh to allow him to live. When Pharaoh wouldn't repent, God hardened his heart further.

Praise God, none of us get what we deserve. Praise Him for his mercy and grace. But don't use God's mercy for an excuse for further rebellion.

Can Anyone Resist the Will of God? (vv. 19-29)

If God's will decides whom will receive mercy, then isn't the basis for judgment God's will rather than human actions? Rather than making an appeal to human free will, Paul simply points out it's presumptuous for the creation to sit in judgment of the creator. God has the right to make vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. He has the right to be patient with those who deserve His wrath. He has the right to make objects of mercy to whom he can display his riches and glory. It's almost as though Paul is saying, if God's sovereignty is difficult to understand it's because people mistakenly think God owes them salvation.

As God's creation, we would do well to humble ourselves before Him, and thank Him for the mercy and grace He gives us.