

Timeless Truth



ROMANS: CHAPTER NINE

WEEK NINE | JUNE DIXON

TIMELESS TEACHING |

Romans 9

“WHO ARE YOU, O MAN?”

— Understanding God’s sovereignty and our humility.

Romans Nine confronts us with one of the deepest questions in Scripture: Who are we before a sovereign, merciful God? Paul is dealing with Israel’s unbelief, the faith of the Gentiles, and the nature of God’s choice. But, beneath these issues lies a more personal question: How do we understand our identity in relationship to God’s purposes?

- I. **WHO ARE YOU O ISRAEL?** (v.1-5) So, who was Israel—
 - A. **To Paul: they are “his people”.** Paul states that he is deeply and continually heartbroken about his people, the Jews.
 - B. **They were God’s own adopted children.** God described them as his firstborn son (His heir) in Exodus 4:22.
 - C. **They were the people whom God favored and to whom He revealed His glory as in during the time of Moses** (Exodus 16:10; 24:17).

- II. **WHO ARE YOU O CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE?** (v. 6-13)

Paul begins to make a distinction between the physical descendants of Israel and what we might call "true Israel." He shows that in the end God will keep his promises to Israel through the children of the promise.

He points here to one of the promises given by God to Abraham. Isaac’s birth was by divine intervention, symbolizing that the true people of God are born not by human effort, but by God’s sovereign action.

Paul want us to understand that God's choice was not based on the right parents nor was it based on behavior, good or bad, since the boys were still unborn. Thirdly, Paul says it was *before they had done anything at all*. He repeats that it

was not because of any future works.

III. WHO ARE YOU, HUMAN (v20)? (v. 14-23)

Is God unfair? Paul answers firmly: Absolutely not. Why? Because mercy is never owed. The shocking truth of Romans 9 is not that God judges some—but that He saves anyone at all. Does this not help you trust God even when His ways are hard to understand?"

Paul adds a new statement: God will harden whomever He wishes to, as well. Pharaoh appears 20 times in Exodus regarding Hardening. Ten times Pharaoh hardens his own heart and ten times God hardens Pharaoh's heart. Divine Hardening is God judicially confirming a person's chosen rebellion. It's not making an innocent person wicked; it is God giving a rebel over to his own path.

God gives justice to some and mercy to others—but He never gives injustice to anyone. God used Pharaoh's resistance to display His power. Pharaoh hardened his heart—and God used that rebellion for His purposes. The life application study Bible has a great insight: God's judgment on Pharaoh's sin was to harden his heart to confirm his disobedience, so the consequences of his rebellion would be his own punishment.

Let's look at clay. Clay is dependent. It is shapeable. It's not autonomous and it's certainly not self creating. Clay does not ask why the Potter molded it this way. Clay does not accuse the Potter of being unfair. (From Isaiah 40:5-9 and Jeremiah 18:6).

IV. WHO ARE YOU O GENTILE? (v. 24-26)

Paul quotes from a passage (Hosea 2:23) originally written about God's commitment to one day restore the exiled northern ten tribes of Israel. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul applies Hosea's text to Gentiles, as well as Jews. In Paul's context, to those who were once not God's people and were not "beloved" by Him, He has now declared to be His people, and He calls them "beloved." In this way, God has exercised His right to show mercy on whom He will show mercy, including the Gentiles. Now Gentiles, too, through faith in Christ, will be called the sons of the living God (Romans 8:16–17).

V. WHO ARE YOU O ISRAEL? (v. 27–33)

Now Paul quotes from Isaiah 10:22–23, regarding the Jewish people. God has kept His promise to Abraham. The sons of Israel have become as the sands of the sea (Genesis 22:17). That promise did not obligate God, however, to eternally save every son and daughter of Israel. In fact, Isaiah writes that only a remnant will be

saved--not the entire offspring of the nation and not even the entire offspring of the children of the promise.

Now we come to the crux of the matter in verses 30-32. Paul's entire argument that God will show His mercy to some Jews and not others has been based on what he has written earlier in Romans. God will show His mercy exclusively and only to those who come to Him by faith in Christ. Up to this point in chapter 9, however, Paul has not anchored this argument to Jesus Himself. He begins to do so now.

Still, a declaration of righteousness is exactly the "stamp" God has given to Gentiles who come to Him by faith in Christ. In His mercy and grace, God has given to them credit for Jesus' righteousness and has accepted Jesus' death as payment for their sin. This means a Gentile's salvation is exactly the same as that of a Jewish person: by grace through faith.

The scriptures never say, "Try to determine whether you are elect." They say rather: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31.) and "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12) We rest on the Rock today! Israel stumbled over the stumbling stone.

The idea of a "stumbling stone," as mentioned here is an odd thing. Who would deliberately place a rock for people to trip over? Paul's quotes from Isaiah in this verse shows that the stone is tripped over because it is **rejected**, rather than being received by faith.

For believers He is the Cornerstone, For unbelievers He is a Stumbling Stone.

CONCLUSION

"Romans 9 leaves us with three anchors:

God's heart is compassionate.

God's choice is sovereign and just.

God's salvation comes by faith, not performance.

This chapter isn't meant to confuse us—it's meant to humble us, comfort us, and help us trust a God whose promises never fail."

APPLICATION — WHAT DOES "WHO ARE YOU, O MAN?" MEAN FOR US?

When we don't understand God: His timing, His decisions, His permissions, His calling, His distribution of gifts, His plan for others. Humility says: "God, You know things I do not." I was chosen for mercy. We are called to trust. We trust the Potter because he is good.

So the question is, will you choose to trust God's character when you cannot trace God's plan? Do we ask, "Where am I resisting God's hand in my life?" "Where do I need to stop questioning and start trusting?"

WEEK NINE

ROMANS: CHAPTER NINE

NO, DON'T SAY THAT. WHO ARE YOU, A MERE HUMAN BEING, TO ARGUE WITH GOD? SHOULD THE THING THAT WAS CREATED SAY TO THE ONE WHO CREATED IT, "WHY HAVE YOU MADE ME LIKE THIS?"

ROMANS 9:20 NLT

DAY ONE

ROMANS 9 | God's Heart for His People



TIMELESS TRUTH |

“MY HEART IS FILLED WITH BITTER SORROW AND UNENDING GRIEF FOR MY PEOPLE, MY JEWISH BROTHERS AND SISTERS. I WOULD BE WILLING TO BE FOREVER CURSED—CUT OFF FROM CHRIST!—IF THAT WOULD SAVE THEM.”

ROMANS 9:2–3 NLT

Read Romans 9:1-5

As you start your devotions this week, I want to pay attention to what Paul says in verse one. He speaks of his conscience and the Holy Spirit. As you study this and all biblical passages and try to live in accordance to what we learn, like Paul, we must always remember that only when the Holy Spirit controls the conscience can it be trusted. Our human conscience will always remain imperfect and must be evaluated against what the Spirit is speaking through the Word. What a gentle yet profound reminder as we delve into a really difficult passage.

Paul opens Romans 9 with a shocking confession: he would accept being “accursed” if it meant his fellow Israelites would know Christ. He carries unceasing anguish over their unbelief. True love feels the weight of another’s lostness. Paul’s pain is not irritation or judgment—it’s sorrow. He wishes himself forever cursed for Israel’s sake. This mirrors the heart of Christ who was cut off or cursed for sinners. Do we grieve for the spiritually distant—or avoid them?

1. Why is Paul in “great sorrow and unceasing anguish”?

2. What does Paul mean by wishing he were “accursed,” “cursed”, or “cut off” for them?

3. What does this teach us about Christian compassion?

Privilege does not guarantee salvation. Israel was truly privileged. Yet many rejected Him. Spiritual heritage (Christian family, church attendance, Bible knowledge) is not salvation. Christ is. God singled out the Jews to be his chosen nation. Paul lists nine privileges God gave to them.

4. What privileges did Israel possess?

- a. Israel was God's son, His 'a _____' son.
- b. Only to Israel did God reveal his shekinah _____.
- c. God had bound himself to the nation forever with solemn c_____.s.
- d. God made Israel the steward of the fundamental moral code of God, His l_____.
- e. God made promises to this people He never made to any other people. They were given the p_____, the fathers of the nation who were mighty and powerful men.
- f. Finally. The Lord God gives us _____, the savior of the world.

5. What is the danger of relying on spiritual privilege (listed above) instead of Christ?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Lord, give me a heart like Paul—one that aches for people who do not yet know You. Fill me with compassion, patience, and perseverance as I pray for them. Use me as a witness of Your love. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As we live this day we are reminded: God's heart breaks for the lost; let mine break too.

FURTHER READING |

Exodus 4:22—God's first born son.

Luke 19:41-44—Jesus weeps over Jerusalem

Exodus 19:3-6—Obey My voice

Romans 10:1—I pray for their salvation

As followers of Jesus, our greatest mission in this life is the pursuit of lost souls. We are to evangelize or we will fossilize.

Adrian Rogers

DAY TWO

ROMANS 9 | The Faithfulness of God's Promise



TIMELESS TRUTH |

“IT IS NOT AS THOUGH GOD'S WORD HAS FAILED.”

ROMANS 9:6 NLT

Read Romans 9:6-13

Paul argues that not all who descend from Israel belong to Israel. God chooses Abraham out of the whole human race; Isaac over Ishmael; Jacob over Esau—His covenant flows through His promise, not mere pedigree.

God's faithfulness is not threatened by human failure. Many Israelites rejected Christ, but this doesn't mean God's word failed. His promises work through His sovereign plan, not our expectations.

1. What problem is Paul addressing and what is his answer?

God's election magnifies grace. Jacob is chosen over Esau before birth, before doing good or evil. This shows salvation rests on God's call, not human effort. Election is not about favoritism—it's about grace being truly grace. Adrian Rogers says that it is at this point that many say that God sovereignly chooses from eternity past, some to be saved and some to go to hell. But if we understand what God is choosing for and on what basis, the idea of His creating some and sending them to hell does not stand.

He says three things about predestination. One, predestination is national, not personal. Two, predestination is to service, not salvation, and three, predestination is based on preference, not abhorrence. That's deep.

2. Read Genesis 25:23. What does God say Rebekah is carrying in her womb? _____; God chooses one nation over another.

3. Also, according to Adrian Rogers, God is not talking about choice to salvation, but choice to service. Who is serving whom? _____

Jacob was chosen simply as a matter of preference on God's part. In v13, Paul quotes from Malachi 1:2-3. "In the words of the Scripture, 'I loved Jacob, but I rejected (hated) Esau'" actually refers to the descendants of Jacob (the Jews) and the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) and contains a startling statement. The quote from the lips of God seems contrary to our usual understanding of Him. We easily understand that He would love an unborn child, but why and how could He have hated Esau, let alone before birth? That's not the God we think we know. We have to keep in mind that cultures differ in how they speak, which involves more than just the specific words they use. Different societies use different forms and figures of speech, as well. In that era, the love-hate phrasing is meant to show a **contrast**, not to imply that one side is looked at in some insulting way. It was also meant to show **comparison**: Jesus said this Luke 14:26. Jesus wanted disciples who were so deeply committed to Him that their love for their family members looked like hate by comparison.

4. So, why is Jacob chosen over Esau?

God often chooses the unlikely. Isaac the miracle-child, not Ishmael the natural one. Jacob the younger, not Esau the firstborn. God delights in overturning human norms to reveal His power. How is Jacob an unlikely choice and what encouragement does this give us?

The doctrine of election is meant to create humility, not pride. We didn't earn salvation; we received it. This frees us from boasting and anchors us in gratitude.

5. Why does election remove boasting? What should be the emotional response to election?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Father, thank You that Your word never fails. Strengthen my trust in Your timing and Your purposes. Help me rest in the assurance that Your promises to me are secure. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As we live this day we are reminded: God's promises are stronger than my circumstances.

FURTHER READING |

Luke 14:26 – Jesus speaks of hate.

Genesis 17:15–19—I will establish my covenant with him.

Genesis 25:21–26—Two nations are in your womb.

Galatians 4:28—And you are children of the promise.

His Word has not failed. He will still keep His promises to Israel. God does not go back on His word.

Romans 9:6
BibleRef.com

DAY THREE

ROMANS 9 | Mercy from God's heart



TIMELESS TRUTH |

“I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY.”

ROMANS 9:15 NLT

Read Romans 9: 14–18

Paul tackles the question: Is God unjust? He answers with God's own words to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.” God hardens Pharaoh to display His power and proclaim His name. Mercy is never owed. If mercy is owed, it becomes entitlement. God's mercy is free, uncoerced compassion for the undeserving.

At first glance, God hardening Pharaoh's heart can feel troubling. It raises questions about fairness, responsibility, and human freedom. Yet Scripture does not present this event as an embarrassment to explain away but as a display of God's glory. Pharaoh was not a neutral man forced into evil. He was already proud, cruel, and resistant to God. God's hardening did not create rebellion in His heart. It confirmed him in the path he had already chosen. By doing so, God revealed His unmatched power, His righteous judgment, and His saving mercy toward Israel.

Through Pharaoh's resistance, God's name was proclaimed not only in Egypt but across generations and nations. What Pharaoh intended for defiance, God used for deliverance. The story reminds us that God is never reacting to human decisions. He is always accomplishing his sovereign purposes.

1. Why does Paul ask, “Is God unjust?”

2. How does God answer that charge?

3. Why is it comforting that mercy is undeserved?

Hardening and mercy both serve God’s redemptive purpose. Pharaoh’s hardening is not arbitrary cruelty; it magnifies God’s deliverance and exposes human pride. God sometimes allows hearts to become what they insist on being—so His glory becomes undeniable.

4. Why did God raise up Pharaoh?

5. Does God harden innocent hearts?

6. What is the purpose of hardening?

7. How does this help us trust God’s sovereignty?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Lord, thank You for Your mercy. Remind me daily that my salvation rests not on my effort but on Your grace. Help me reflect that mercy to others. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As we live this day, we are reminded that we live by mercy, not merit.

FURTHER READING |

Exodus 9:16 – I raised you up...

Exodus 33:19—I will show mercy

Titus 3:5—He saves us because of His mercy

Ephesians 2:4–7—He is rich in mercy

God's mercy and grace give me hope for myself and for our world.

Billy Graham

DAY FOUR

ROMANS 9 | God's Sovereignty; Human Responsibility



TIMELESS TRUTH |

“WHO ARE YOU, O MAN, TO ANSWER BACK TO GOD?”

ROMANS 9:20 NLT

Read Romans 9:19–29

Humans resist being clay, wanting instead to be potters. We prefer to judge God’s work rather than trust His hands. But Paul reminds us: God is the potter and we are the clay. This is not demeaning; it’s liberating. Safety is found in being shaped by perfect love.

- 1. Why do people struggle with God’s sovereignty?

Paul cites Hosea and Isaiah to show that God always intended to call a people beyond ethnic Israel and at the same time preserve a remnant within Israel. God includes the outsiders. “Those who were not My people, I will call My people.” Paul applies this to Gentiles. Grace welcomes the least likely into the family of God. God preserves a remnant, not a majority. Even within Israel, it is the remnant chosen by grace that receives the promise. Faithfulness is not about numbers but about God keeping His word.

- 2. Why is this good news for the world? How should this shape the church as we welcome people in?

- 3. What is a remnant? Why is the remnant important?

4. What encouragement does the remnant give believers today as we note what is going on in the world around us?

Judgment and mercy walk together. Isaiah says that if God had not preserved a remnant, Israel would have become like Sodom. God's wrath is real, but His mercy triumphs by preserving a seed of hope.

5. Why does Paul mention Sodom and Gomorrah?

6. What does this teach about judgment and also mercy?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Father, You are the potter and I am the clay. Shape me, mold me, and correct my heart where needed. Help me trust Your wisdom even when I don't understand Your ways. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As we live this day, we are reminded that God shapes us with purpose, not randomness.

FURTHER READING |

Isaiah 29:16—How foolish can one be?

Jeremiah 18:1–6—As the clay is in the potter's hand...

1 Peter 2:9–10—You are a chosen people

It's impossible for us to fully understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will and responsibility. Only God truly knows how they work together in his plan of salvation.

Gotquestions.org

DAY FIVE

ROMANS 9 | Righteousness by Faith Alone



TIMELESS TRUTH |

“THE GENTILES... ATTAINED RIGHTEOUSNESS, EVEN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS BY FAITH.”
ROMANS 9:30 NLT

Read Romans 9:30–33

Gentiles who didn’t pursue righteousness have found it by faith. Israel, pursuing the law, missed it because they sought it by works. Christ becomes either a stumbling stone or a foundation stone.

The gospel reverses human expectations. Those without religious effort (Gentiles) obtain righteousness. Those with abundant zeal (Israel) miss it. Moral effort alone cannot save. Only Christ can.

- 1. Why did Gentiles find righteousness and why did Israel miss it?

Self-righteousness is the greatest barrier to God. Israel stumbled because they pursued law-keeping as the basis of righteousness. Pride blinded them to their need for grace.

- 2. Why is self-righteousness so dangerous?

- 3. How does the gospel confront self-righteousness? (Rom 3:23)

Christ is either the rock we stand on or the stone we trip over. We either trust Him or reject Him—there is no neutral posture. Is Christ your foundation or your obstacle? Faith is the only way to righteousness—Not performance. Not background. Not spiritual achievements. Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame—this is the scandalous simplicity of the gospel.

4. What does “stumbling stone” mean?

5. What does “cornerstone” mean?

6. What determines whether Christ is a rock or a stumbling stone?

7. What is the promise to those who believe?

8. Why can works (the law) never produce righteousness?

PRAYER MOMENT |

Jesus, thank You that righteousness comes from You, not me. Keep me from striving and teach me to rest in Your finished work. Let my life be built on the Rock that never fails. Amen.

DAILY REMINDER |

As we live this day, we are reminded that our righteousness is in Christ, not in our performance.

FURTHER READING |

Galatians 2:16—One is made right with God by faith.

Philippians 3:8–9—God’s way of making us right with Himself...

Isaiah 28:16—I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem...

Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while he is still in a sinning state.

Chuck Swindoll