

The Righteousness of God and faithfulness to Israel. (9-11)

A. The explanation of Israel's rejection. (9:1-10:21)

1. Election through Divine sovereignty (Past) (9:1-33)

- Christians continue to debate the nature of God's sovereign choice and human responsibility. A few preliminary observations need to precede our looking at one of the key texts in this debate.
 1. We all act as though we are responsible for many things in life – we lock our doors at night, etc. If actions reflect beliefs then no one really believes that God is in control of all details of life.
 2. We are constrained by many external and internal factors – environment, genetics, personality, etc. No one seriously believes that humans have perfectly free volition.
 3. God is sovereign in at least some aspects of life. No one who takes the Bible seriously questions the fact that God is in control of at least some aspects of history and human behavior. The question is – How much does God control? and Is God's election to salvation corporate (Christ is the elect) or individual (each believer is elect)?
 4. The Scripture speaks of God's sovereignty and human responsibility without explaining how they relate to each other. Christians tend to explain one in terms of the other claiming that one is clear and the other is a mystery.
- This passage is perhaps the central passage in Scripture in the "sovereignty of God" debates. Is Paul speaking of individual election to salvation on the basis of His sovereign choice or is Paul speaking about His choice of Christ and the church as a part of His plan – leaving individual participation a matter of human "free choice?"

Election

(three views)

God has chosen the nation Israel.

Salvation is the result of being a part of the Jewish covenant family and under its Law.

God has chosen the Body of Christ.

Salvation is the result of being "in Christ" through each person's free choice (faith).

God has chosen each individual believer.

Salvation is the result of being chosen by God onto faith in Christ.

Note that all three positions have Scriptural support.

The question is – Where is the emphasis to be placed?

- While the passage can certainly be read as a proof text of sovereign election of individuals, its context suggests that Paul is addressing a question about God's plan for a nation or group. I will explain Paul's argument along those lines. There are two questions that a Jewish reader would ask upon reading chapter 1-8.

- (1) How are we to understand God's promise to the Jews stating that they were His chosen people?
- (2) Is God's plan fair to the Jews?

a. Paul's sincere compassion. (9:1-5)

¹ I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed, {separated} from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the {temple} service and the promises, ⁵ whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Paul starts by making it very clear that he has no personal disdain for Jews. What he is about to say is not motivated by a personal disrespect for Israel according to the flesh. This is remarkable given the way the Jewish leaders had treated him (as we observe in the book of Acts where he was misunderstood, having his motives challenged, and his life threatened. We also might note that Paul's personality was likely to seek justice if not revenge rather than self-sacrificing mercy.
- Jews (according to the flesh) who do not believe the Gospel, are accursed and separated from God in spite of their zeal for religion and God. In Rom. 10:1-4 “¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for {their} salvation. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”
- Paul does not deny but affirms that the Israelites were given special favor by God in many ways but this did not insure their salvation if faith was not present.
- To understand Paul's heart we might note four things.
 1. Paul could reflect back on his own life and empathize with the plight and blindness of the Jews. Phil.2 “⁴ although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”
 2. Paul had been forgiven and shown mercy. He now wanted others to share his path.
 3. Paul counted it a blessing to be able to know Christ through the sharing of his suffering. Phil.2 “⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which {comes} from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection

and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

- 4. Paul saw spiritual warfare as a dynamic element behind the actions of his Jewish opponents. Eph. 6** “¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places}.”

b. God's sovereign choice. (9:6-33)

1. It is fact. (9:6-13)

a. Principle: (9:6-7a)

6 But {it is} not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are {descended} from Israel; 7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants,

- Paul is addressing a question every thoughtful Jew would ask - Did not God promise the Kingdom blessings to Jews just because they were participants in the Jewish race and Law? Was Paul suggesting that the promises were not true?
- Paul reveals a key principle here - true Israel is defined not by the blood-line of Abraham but by the faith-line of Abraham.
- Note that this chapter deals primarily with the nation Israel not with individuals. It is tempting to see in this chapter powerful proof texts for a strong Calvinist view of individual election but that is not Paul's purpose in this chapter.
- There are some who are of the blood-line that also are of the faith-line.

b. Proof: (9:6-7a)

1. Isaac (9:7b-9)

but: *"through Isaac your descendants will be named."* 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is a word of promise: *"At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son."*

- Isaac is an illustration of this point. Abraham had two sons (Isaac and Ishmael) but only one carried the promise. The promise was given to Isaac (from Sarah) not Ishmael (from Hagar).
- The implication is that Isaac represented "true Israel" while Ishmael did not. The focus is upon the lineage of the nation.
- It was the promise of God that determined the faith descendants of Abraham (not the blood line of Abraham).
- The notion of corporate election (in Christ) is not foreign to Paul - Eph.1:4 "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." The repeated reference to "in Christ" in the first chapter of Ephesians suggests to many that Christ is the elect and we are united with him as we believe.

2. Jacob (9:10-13)

10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived {twins} by one man, our father Isaac; 11 for though {the twins} were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to {His} choice

might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, ¹² it was said to her, “*The older will serve the younger.*” (Gen.25:23) ¹³ Just as it is written, “*Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*” (Mal.1:2-4)

- Jacob provides a similar illustration in that he was chosen by God over Esau his brother.
- The choice here was of God not by man. It had nothing to do with their personal moral record.
- It should be noted here, that Paul is not addressing the question of personal salvation but rather of the validity of distinction between a true and false Israel. He is answering those who have wrongly identified the blood-line of Abraham with the sense of entitlement in the Kingdom of God.
- It was not Esau (the individual) who served Jacob but the Esau's blood line (Edom) that served Jacob's blood line (Israel). The quote from Malachi (six hundreds years after Jacob's birth) makes it clear that Jacob and Esau are euphemisms for two nations.

2. It is fair. (9:14-18)

a. Moses: (9:14-16)

¹⁴ What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!
¹⁵ For He ways to Moses, “*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*” (Ex.33:19) ¹⁶ so then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy,

- Paul's readers are going to next ask - How can this be just?
- The quotation from Exodus 33 is from a context where God's ongoing care of Israel as a nation is in question. Individual salvation is not the issue in Exodus 33.
- The point seems to be - Man does not make the rules, God does. It is not man's plan but God's plan that is paramount. Man does not determine his fate by obedience to the Law but by cooperation with God's plan of free grace.

b. Pharaoh: (9:17-18)

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “*For this very purpose, I raised you up. To demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.*” (Ex.9:16) ¹⁸ so than He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

- Pharaoh's hardened heart is a two way street. Pharaoh is said to have hardened his heart (Ex.8:15,32), God apparently, sealed Pharaoh's fate by turning him over to the consequences of his choices (Rom.1:24,26 ,28; 2:5). Vs.28 “Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”

- Again, the primary issue is not the individual fate of Pharaoh or Moses but rather what they illustrate about God's plan for the nation Israel.

