

## Romans 9

### *The Place of Israel in the Plan of God: Romans 9-10-11*

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed [cut off] from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

9:1-3 Having set forth the great doctrines of human bondage and divine deliverance from the power and pollution of sin the apostle turns attention to the place of Israel in the plan of God. Paul's willingness to address this subject was based on his great love for his kinsmen as Moses also loved his brethren (Ex. 32:31-32). But there was another reason. The apostle knew that many godly Jews in Rome were concerned as they watched national Israel reject Christ as Messiah and Savior. What fate awaited such horrendous national behavior? In Romans 9 Paul will address God's past relationship with Israel. In Romans 10 he will write of God's present dealings with Israel in the form of divine discipline. In Romans 11 the future of Israel will be considered.

4 Who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God*, and the promises;

5 Whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

9:4-5 The agony of Paul's soul was intense because the apostle understood how great were the privileges his brethren had historically. He mentions several great privileges associated with national Israel.

1. Israel had the adoption of God (Ex. 4:22,23).
2. Israel had the Shekinah glory.
3. Israel had the covenant (Gen. 22:16-18)
4. Israel had the Law (Ex 20).
5. Israel had the services of the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood
6. Israel had the promises (Num. 24:15-19; Isa. 53:49)
7. Israel had the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
8. Israel had the Messiah

6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel:

9:6 Into the divine narrative Paul is led to make a sudden and dramatic distinction between religious Israel, racial Israel and regenerate Israel by teaching that not all Israel is Israel.

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

9:7 Over the centuries the Jews had promoted among themselves the idea they were a racially superior nation because of their great spiritual privileges and because they had Abraham as their father. However, simply being of the physical seed of Abraham did not automatically make individuals the children of God. The descendants of Ishmael came from the seed of Abraham, but they were not the children of God. The reason? They were not of divine promise. They were children of the flesh.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

9:8-9 In the divine economy the way Ishmael came into the world is considered to be fleshly. God had promised Abraham a child but, growing impatient, Sarah gave her handmaiden to Abraham who conceived the child Ishmael. The problem was God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son according to promise. Ishmael was not the product of promise but the child of the flesh. Only the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

10 And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

9:10 There is something more. The children of God are not only those who are according to promise but those who are chosen according to the election of grace illustrated in the lives of the twin boys Esau and Jacob.

11 (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

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

9:11-13

The election of individuals to be the children of God is according to the Lord's own sovereign choice, a choice which has nothing to do with race nor personal merit or ability. For example, before Esau or Jacob were born God made His choice of who would serve whom and which individual would be the object of His special love.

The reason for the divine selection prior to the birth of the children or the lives they would lead was so the principle of sovereign grace might be established. Had God based His decision on merit He might have chosen Esau for Jacob was a scheming man out to make himself rich at the expense of others. Then one night by the babbling brook of Jabbok he met the Lord and became the object of redeeming grace.

*Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,*

*There where the blood of the Lamb was  
spilt.*

*Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon  
and cleanse within;*

*Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.*

~\*~

Julia H. Johnson

~\*~

Election is "*not of works, but of Him  
that calleth.*"

14 What shall we say then? *Is  
there* unrighteousness with God?  
God forbid.

9:14 If the doctrine of election with a  
view to service and / or salvation sounds  
intrinsically unfair it is not as Paul  
asserts. God is not unrighteous. Indeed,  
such a thought is unworthy of Him. The  
doctrine of election is rooted in  
righteousness and in the absolute  
sovereignty of God over His creation, a  
point to which the heart must bow in  
humble submission.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will  
have mercy on whom I will have  
mercy, and I will have compassion  
[pity] on whom I will have  
compassion.

16 So then *it is* not of him that  
willeth, nor of him that runneth,  
but of God that sheweth mercy.

17 For the scripture saith unto  
Pharaoh, Even for this same  
purpose have I raised thee up, that  
I might shew my power in thee,  
and that my name might be  
declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on  
whom he will *have mercy*, and  
whom he will he hardeneth.

9:17-18

To impress upon the heart the  
absolute sovereignty of God in the  
matter of election to service and / or  
salvation, Paul brings to the forefront the  
plight of Pharaoh, the mighty monarch  
of the Exodus Generation.

Pharaoh thought that he was the ruler  
of millions and the ultimate master of  
the multitudes. Pharaoh thought he could  
treat his subjects in any manner that he  
pleased.

Proud Pharaoh thought he held life  
and death in his hands. If he wanted to  
practice ethnic cleansing, he would do  
just that. The royal order was given.  
(Exodus 1:8-22) The Hebrew male  
children were to be murdered, but of one  
baby in particular God said in His secret  
counsel (Deuteronomy 29:29), "*Touch  
him not*", and Moses was spared.

Time passed and truth crystallized:  
Pharaoh's free will was subject to the  
Sovereign will of God. In fact, as the  
Plan of God unfolded,

Pharaoh was nothing more than a  
vessel fitted to destruction! (Romans  
9:22) "*For the scripture saith unto  
Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose  
have I raised thee up, that I might show  
my power in thee, and that my name  
might be declared throughout all the  
earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom  
he will have mercy and whom he will he  
hardeneth*" (Romans 9:17,18).

19 Thou wilt say then unto me,  
Why doth he yet find fault? For  
who hath resisted his will?

9:19 Despite the sovereignty of God, the Lord still holds individuals responsible for their attitude and actions—just as parents who bring children into the world hold them responsible for their attitude and actions. The question comes “*Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?*” (Romans 9:19). To the fleshly heart there is a sense of frustration to be told that God is sovereign and yet individuals are still held accountable for what they say and do.

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

9:20-21 The rhetorical questions contain their own answers. The divine position is that God has the right to hold His creation to whatever level of accountability He chooses. Discussion ends at that point for, “*Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?*” (Romans 9:20b-21)

22 *What* if God, willing to shew [demonstrate] *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the

vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

9:22-23 Though God does make vessels according to promise as in the case of Isaac, fit for service as in the life of Jacob and fit for destruction illustrated by Pharaoh, He is also pleased to make many vessels to display His mercy in order to make known His glory. In fact, the greatness of the glory of God is best revealed against the black backdrop of sin.

Humans would never know anything about grace if it were not for sin and the agony of the Savior. We would never know anything about mercy and infinite love apart from sin.

The angels do not know about mercy and grace, which is one reason why they are curious about the actions associated with salvation. (1 Pet. 1:12)

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

9:24-26 Those who are the heirs of salvation are a privileged people. What a blessing it is for Gentiles to understand something about the, "*riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory*" (Romans 9:23). What a privilege it is for Gentiles to be united with the spiritual remnant of elect Jews (Romans 9:27-29) in order to discover a righteousness that was never sought.

27 Esaias [Isaiah] also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

28 For he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

29 And as Esaias [Isaiah] said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock

of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

9:27-33

Only sovereign grace has made it possible for the Gentiles, who never sought the Lord, to be converted.

Only sovereign grace has made it possible for a remnant of Jews from a privileged nation that became offended at the Messiah to remain alive in order to be saved with a view to serving God.

Only sovereign grace has kept stumbling souls from the second death (Rev. 20:6).

Only sovereign grace has devised a system of salvation so that, "*whosoever believeth on him [Christ] shall not be ashamed*" (Romans 9:33).

To every person who comes under the sound of the gospel the divine command is given with promise. Believe on Christ and you will never be ashamed. Believe on Christ and you will know you are numbered among the elect. (Acts 16:31; 1 Thess. 1:4).

## Study Guide

### Romans

#### *Questions on Romans 9*

1. List eight great spiritual privileges associated with national Israel.
2. What did Paul mean when he said that not all Israel is Israel?
3. Whom does Paul use to illustrate the doctrine of election?
4. List the two great questions of concerns that are raised and answered by Paul in Romans 9.
5. How can a person know if God has chosen them for service and / or salvation?

#### *Answers to Romans 9*

1. Paul notes eight great privileges associated with national Israel.
  - a. Israel had the adoption of God (Ex. 4:22,23).
  - b. Israel had the Shekinah glory.
  - c. Israel had the covenant (Gen. 22:16-18)
  - d. Israel had the Law (Ex 20).
  - e. Israel had the services of the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood
  - f. Israel had the promises (Num. 24:15-19; Isa. 53:49)
  - g. Israel had the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
  - h. Israel had the Messiah
2. Paul was teaching there is a religious, racial and regenerate Israel. Only those who have the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are to be considered the children of promise and the true regenerate and spiritual "*Israel*" of God.
3. Isaac was chosen over Ishmael, Jacob was chosen over Esau and

Pharaoh was raised up to demonstrate the power of God.

4. The two following questions of concern were raised and answered by the apostle.
  - a. Is there unrighteousness with God? (Rom. 9:14)
  - b. Why does God yet find fault? (Rom. 9:19)
5. There is a divine promise associated with Acts 16:31. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* "

#### *Personal Application and Reflection*

1. Why do you think the doctrine of election to service and / or salvation has been and is such a controversial topic among Christians (Luke 4:25-29)?
2. Do you believe people have a right to question God in the outworking of His will? Why or why not?
3. Are you emotionally comfortable with the doctrine of election? If so why and if not, why not?
4. Did Paul answer the questions of concern fully or do you wish he would have said more? Cite the verses you would like more information on.
5. If you could visit with Paul about the doctrine of election, what question would you like to ask him, if any? Make a list of your questions.