

Start your study here

Read Read, Record, Reflect, Respond

Prayerfully	Reflectively	Extensively	Creatively	Intensively	Specifically	Effectively
					Repeated Alike Different Accentuated Related	
					Think Context!	

Romans 9:1-13

1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—
 I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—
 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.
 3 For I could wish that I myself
 were accursed
 and cut off from Christ
 for the sake of my brothers,
 my kinsmen according to the flesh.
 4 They are Israelites,
 and to them belong
 the adoption,
 the glory,
 the covenants,
 the giving of the law,
 the worship,
 and the promises.
 5 To them belong
 the patriarchs,
 and from their race,
 according to the flesh,
 is the Christ
 who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

 For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,
 7 and not all are children of Abraham
 because they are his offspring,
 but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”
 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God,
 but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.
 9 For this is what the promise said:
 “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”
 10 And not only so,
 but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man,
 our forefather Isaac,
 11 though they were not yet born
 and had done nothing either good or bad
 —in order that God’s purpose of election might continue,
 not because of works but because of him who calls—
 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”
 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (ESV)

Review: Believers have a new relationship in the sphere of righteousness (6:1-14) as slaves of God rather than sin (6:14-23), and need to understand their total inability by their own will power to overcome sin's seductive pull (7:1-25). They must remember they have been adopted into God's family (8:12-17) and are provided the presence of the indwelling Spirit to empower the transformation process (8:1-11) which might (will) take place in the presence of suffering, God has a plan for their transformation and ultimate glorification (8:26-30) which nothing or no one can prevent (8:31-39).

Key Question: What objection was Paul anticipating? What truth did Paul need to teach?

Context: In light of God's promises, what about Israel? Are the promises God made to them void? Will He do the same to the promises in Romans 8?

Romans 9:1-13

1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—

I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself

were accursed
and cut off from Christ

for the sake of my brothers,
my kinsmen according to the flesh.

ἀνάθεμα—*anathema*—cursed, damned or excluded

Which I have just said cannot happen

Implication—they (ethnic Jews) seem to have been “cut off” or excluded in spite of their many privileges (see also 3:1-8). Present situation seem inconsistent.

“Israelites”—focuses more on the nation and its promises than on their ethnicity.

The 6 items in v. 4 have a rhyme pattern (the endings of the word -ια, -α, -αι) and form couplets (see notes)

Contrast

4 They are Israelites,
and to them belong
the adoption,
the glory,
the covenants,
the giving of the law,
the worship,
and the promises.

A change from simply “whose” to “from whom” indication connection but not “ownership” or exclusivity—and only so “according to the flesh”

5 To them belong
the patriarchs,
and from their race,
according to the flesh,
is the Christ
who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

The punctuation of the verse has been debated, ESV is probably correct in making this a very clear statement of the Deity of Messiah/Christ/Jesus—universal sovereignty

Main point of ch 9-11, God's promises haven't failed because He is faithful and merciful

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

Paul must show that the Word of God has not failed in the case of Israel—and that it will not fail in the case of Christians

For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

Jacob or Nation?

7 and not all are children of Abraham

because they are his offspring,
but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

Genesis 21:12

8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God,

but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

9 For this is what the promise said:

Genesis 18:10, 14

“About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

10 And not only so,

but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man,
our forefather Isaac,

11 though they were not yet born
and had done nothing either good or bad

Before Birth
Before Actions

—in order that God's purpose of election might continue,

8:28

not because of works but because of him who calls—

12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

Genesis 25:23

13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (ESV)

Malachi 1:2-3

Illustration #1

Illustration #2

God is faithful to His Word. God is Sovereign.

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

I believe what we will see in Romans 9 is the persistence of a gracious God to love, bless and seek after His people despite their sinful hard-hearted disobedience and sin.

Chapter 9 helps us better understand God’s initiative in the salvific process but also how He balances it with mercy.

Main idea:

God is faithful to His word and will save some of Israel as He has always done.

Teaching idea:

Sovereignty
Mercy

Introduction

What do we do with passages that are not so much hard to understand—but hard to believe?

What objection was Paul anticipating?

What objections would we have coming out of the promises of Romans 8?

What truths does Paul want to teach?

Sovereignty of God
Faithfulness of God

Review

Having told them of the bondage to, and guilt of sin that all humanity is confined in (1:18-3:20) and the glory of salvation by grace through faith (3:21-5:20.) Having challenged them with their new relationship in the sphere of righteousness (6:1-14) as slaves of God rather than sin (6:14-23), who need to understand their total inability to overcome sin’s seductive pull by their own will power (7:1-25) but they must remember they have been adopted into God’s family (8:12-17) and provided the presence of the indwelling Spirit to empower the transformation process (8:1-11) in the face of suffering (8:18-25.) God has a plan for their transformation and ultimate glorification (8:26-30) which nothing or no one can prevent (8:31-39).

The fact that nothing can separate us from the love of God leaves some to wonder, “Can we be separated from God but not His love?” In the context, the “love of God” is the love that foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified. What a fantastic truth.

Paul’s theology integrates the distinct doctrines of justification, election, sanctification, and salvation into one coherent, inseparable interrelationship that is consolidated by God’s reconciling mercy made available exclusively through the substitutionary ministry of Jesus Christ. Hence, election is God’s sovereign choice of believers in Christ for atonement.¹ Justification is the process whereby God exonerates sinners and makes them righteous, so that they may live with him in his kingdom. Sanctification is the process whereby God transforms redeemed sinners into his likeness as an ongoing result of authentic justification and election—the process of a sinner’s transformation into a Christ-like child of God (2 Cor 5:17). And salvation, as the comprehensive summation of election, justification, and sanctification, is the intimate, loving, joyous, peaceful, eternal relationship shared by the redeemed and transformed sinner with holy and merciful creator God. This relationship with its many benefits (forgiveness, healing, peace, the calling of God, eternal life, sonship) is made possible by Jesus’ vicarious death and resurrection and is appropriated exclusively in the lives of those who believe in Jesus and the power of his saving

¹ Similarly, Stuhlmacher (*Romans*, 147): “In the apostle’s view, God’s elective grace, as it manifested itself in the history of Israel, and God’s work of justification belong intimately together!”

work. Paul sees all of this as evidence of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises (Rom 1:16-17).²

Summary

The fourth major section now turns to an issue which would have been in the back of his readers' minds: If God is so righteous, how could he give Israel so many privileges (including unconditional promises) and then reject his chosen people? Chapters 9–11 deal with this issue (note especially 9:6—"It is not as though God's word has failed"), the vindication of God's righteousness in relationship to Israel.³

Preview

Chapter 9 deals primarily with Israel's **PAST** (as God's chosen and privileged people).

Chapter 10 deals primarily with Israel's **PRESENT** (as a nation which has refused to submit to God's gospel).

Chapter 11 deals primarily with Israel's **FUTURE** (a nation which someday will be saved and which will enjoy the fulfillment of the new covenant promises).

As we move into the fourth major section we will encounter a series of concepts we have already seen. Paul will seek to apply the concepts he has taught, to the context into which he was writing. He is writing to a congregation that was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers. A congregation that had started out Jewish through the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius, then became Gentile and now, as Paul writes, has become a mixed congregation. This mixed group was facing issues not only of culture (which we will see when we get to the fifth major section 12-15) but of identity and priority. This was leading Jews to claim a special place in God's favor (3:1-8) and the Gentiles to diminish the Jews' history in light of what they perceived was their favored position at this point in salvific history.

As we proceed through chapters 9-11, I would encourage teachers and students to read all three chapters at one sitting. This will enable you to see the repetition of ideas as well as the interplay of concepts.

Key concepts

- God's mercy
- God's sovereignty
- Man's responsibility

Paul will deal heavily on the concept of mercy. The mercy of God in providing salvation first to the Jew, then to Gentile and then again to the Jew in spite of their history of failure. This discussion of mercy is very important for us to understand. It is easy to claim (or at least feel) that the blessing of salvation and the blessings we experience (abundance of material possession, political freedom, personal rights) are our right. We forget that we receive mercy continually for our own failures and sins (remember chapter 7).

Within this discussion of mercy, Paul will again deal with God's sovereignty and plan as he did in Romans 8:28-39. But as quickly as he discusses God's sovereign plan—reusing terms he has already introduced in chapter 8, "call, foreknew, elect"—he will also discuss man's responsibility, using terms like "cut off".

When we have passages like these that provide a balance (I believe) between sovereignty and free will, or election and responsibility, we tend to gravitate to our theological presupposition. But we must allow the passage in its context to speak. This may mean we are not able to solve all the intricate issues, but which should leave us where Paul concludes, enraptured by God.

² Edward P. Meadors, *God Hardens Whom He Desires: Divine Sovereignty in Romans 9* (ETS paper, this will be in a forthcoming book I believe the title will be, *Divine Sovereignty in Romans 9*).

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (ESV)

May our response to the study of Romans 9-11 create the same effect.

Overview

Although Paul’s primary concern is to vindicate God’s righteousness, he prefaces his remarks by expressing his own deep sorrow over Israel’s unrepentant state (9:1-5). Then he details how God has dealt with the nation in the past (9:6-33). In essence, God’s choice was completely sovereign and gracious (9:1-29), as can be seen in Israel’s very history (9:6-13), as well as on the basis of the principle of God’s sovereignty (9:14-29). Further, they have rejected their Messiah by clinging to the Law (9:30-33).⁴

God, Paul argues, is consistent and utterly faithful to his promises. In order to prove this thesis, he makes three basic points about Israel in these chapters, relating to Israel’s past, present, and future. (1) God’s promises to Israel in the past are consistent with what he is now doing in saving only some Jews and Gentiles as well (9:6 – 29). In 9:30 – 10:21, Paul leaves the main path of his argument to analyze in more detail the surprising turn of events, as so many Jews have refused to believe in Jesus the Messiah while so many Gentiles do. (2) In 11:1 – 10, Paul turns to Israel’s present, showing that God is even now fulfilling his promise by saving many Jews. (3) The climax comes in the future (11:11 – 32), when “all Israel will be saved” (v. 26). Paul concludes the section with a hymn praising the marvelous plan of God (11:33 – 36).⁵

Paul closed the last section teaching that nothing can separate us from the love of God. That leaves some to wonder, “Can we be separated from God but not His love?” In the context, the “love of God” is the love that foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified. This is truly a fantastic truth.

But, the truth of “nothing can separate us from the love of God” seems to clash without our experience. We know individuals who have made professions of faith and then walked away from God. We know individuals who grew up in Christian homes, attended church, made profession of faith, attended Sunday school and then abandoned the church and their faith. What about them?

We also know individuals who lived their whole lives apart from God then on their deathbed trusted in Christ as their Savior. Is that fair?

In Romans 9-11, Paul will deal with these issues in the context of his audience. How can he reconcile his teaching in light of the present (in the eyes of his readers) condition of Israel?

Is God fair?

Is God just?

Is God truly righteous?

Paul will defend the righteousness of God by expounding the doctrine of election. To maintain God’s righteousness and impartiality, the only means by which man could be chosen by God is His unconditional sovereign election. If He only chose some because they were Jewish or because of their good works, then the gain of their salvation would be due to what they did or who they were. Men will be blessed on the benefit of the righteousness of Christ, not on the basis of their works or nationality. So chapter 9 answers the question: “On what basis are some saved and others condemned?” The basis is the sovereign choice of God, divine election.

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Romans: Introduction, Argument, and Outline*, bible.org

⁵ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 291.

But this section is not only about sovereignty and election. While Romans 9 emphasizes God’s sovereignty, Romans 10 emphasizes the responsibility of man.

So these passages have been battle grounds for those who believe primarily in election and for those who believe primarily in free will.

What tends to be lost in the discussion—because we too often frame arguments in systematic theology terms—is the mercy of God.

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

“The Word of God has not failed”

Key phrases/verses in Romans 9-11 (Can be read to gain an overview of the section)

Romans 9:1	Romans 10:21
Romans 9:11	Romans 11:2
Romans 9:14	Romans 11:5-6
Romans 9:16	Romans 11:7
Romans 9:22-24	Romans 11:12
Romans 10:3	Romans 11:20-24
Romans 10:9-13	Romans 11:28-29
Romans 10:14-17	Romans 11:30-32

Outline

I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God’s Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 *What a Mess!*

The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness

The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

C. How It Affects Me 6:1–8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ’s Image

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
2. Believer and the Law 7:1-25
3. Believer and the Holy Spirit 8:1-39

The believer’s relationship to the Holy Spirit gives assurance of victory in Christian life.⁶

To have victory over sin—you must live in the Spirit.

D. Why Israel Rejected It 9:1–11:36

Vindication: Israel’s Rejection of God’s Righteousness

1. Israel’s Rejection Considered 9:1-29
 - a. Paul’s Grief 9:1-5
 - b. Present situation: the Rejection of some not inconsistent with God’s Promise 9:6-13
 - A relationship with God is not based on physical descent (6-9)
 - A relationship with God is not based on character or works (10-13)

⁶ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner’s outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be aware of



Think about it



Talk about it

As we move through chapter 9 we will see more about Mercy. But we start by learning about God's faithfulness and sovereignty.

sn Rom 9:1–11:36. These three chapters are among the most difficult and disputed in Paul's Letter to the Romans. One area of difficulty is the relationship between Israel and the church, especially concerning the nature and extent of Israel's election. Many different models have been constructed to express this relationship. For a representative survey, see M. Barth, *The People of God* (JSNTSup), 22–27. The literary genre of these three chapters has been frequently identified as a diatribe, a philosophical discussion or conversation evolved by the Cynic and Stoic schools of philosophy as a means of popularizing their ideas (E. Käsemann, *Romans*, 261 and 267). But other recent scholars have challenged the idea that Rom 9–11 is characterized by diatribe. Scholars like R. Scroggs and E. E. Ellis have instead identified the material in question as midrash. For a summary and discussion of the rabbinic connections, see W. R. Stegner, "Romans 9.6-29 - A Midrash," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 37-52.⁷

9:1-5 Has Israel been forgotten by God?

Paul's teaching seems to anticipate an objection (probably one he has heard before):

In light of the teaching up to this point . . .

- ☞ the problem of Sin—for all including Israel
- ☞ salvation by faith—for all even Gentiles
- ☞ sanctification—not by self-effort but through the presence of the Holy Spirit
 - who assures us of our relationship with God our Father
 - who (the Father) assures us of our ultimate salvation (Glorification)
 - No Condemnation
 - No Separation

what about Israel?

Interaction

Put yourself in the shoes of a Jewish individual in Rome c. 57 AD.

How would you respond to Paul's teaching up to this point?

How would you respond to Paul—if you had been told your whole life, you were special—you had a privileged position as a child of Abraham?



Talk about it

What about Israel? Hasn't God put aside the people He had chosen?

The history of Israel would seem to be an obvious objection.

How can God promise (or Paul teach) security in light of "abandoning" Israel?

Were they not God's people, are they secure?

Logic would say: "So, if I sin—will I get Israel's fate?"

"Will God give up on me, the way He appears to have given up on Israel?"

Remember also that Paul is writing to a church that is primarily Gentile. So how does this topic address them?

Paul wants his Gentile readers to understand that God's work in Christ is in harmony with His promises to Israel in the Old Testament. And while all are saved by grace through faith, Israel does have a special place in the plan of God.

As he progresses through his explanation, Paul will challenge any *self-pity* on the part of the Israelites and any *arrogance* on the part of Gentiles.

I believe what we will see in Romans 9 is the persistence of a gracious God to love, bless and seek after His people despite their sinful hard-hearted disobedience and sin.

NTS New Testament Studies (a journal)

⁷The NET Bible First Edition Notes (Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006). Ro 9:1.

Plan, Perspective, Patience and Persuasion

In the midst of this we will also see that God, as a sovereign God, has a plan and perspective that is not easy for us to understand. We will see that He is patient, but as a parent at times uses discipline (that may appear harsh) to persuade His people to return to a right relationship with Him.

Often when people study Romans 9-11, they assume it is a parenthetical section that doesn't really fit into the argument. And that it is only about God's sovereignty. I hope as we study these passages, we will understand how it fits into the overall flow of the book and how our understanding of God's sovereignty may be limited. God is a merciful God—even when what He does is a mystery to us and we don't understand it or even when we experience the pain and consequences of sin—ours and that of others.

And there is an assumption that in this section, Paul is stating that God has rejected Israel. One commentary entitles this whole section as:

The Promise of the Gospel Stands: God is Vindicated through His Sovereign Choice, in Rejecting Israel, by Extending Mercy to all and by His Wisdom (9:1–11:36)⁸

Normally when people look at Romans 9-11 (particularly 9-10) their focus is on the sovereignty of God, but they don't truly examine the Old Testament context.

His sovereignty is normally framed in this kind of language:

God can do with people as He wills, as He decides—no matter what they are doing, who they are, or what they can accomplish.

God does what He wants, with whom He wants, when He wants, period.

Now the concept of sovereignty allows for that explanation.

1. Sovereignty: the right to rule because of Who He is (King)
2. Divine Decree: God has a plan for ruling (Ephesians 1)—a plan established in eternity past
3. Foreordination: How God's plan operates—God has ordained beforehand, according to His will, what will come to pass
4. Providence: God does rule in all the affairs of His creation; He works in our circumstances (benevolent guidance)

But let's allow the passage to speak.⁹

What is the main point of the passage?

What does it teach us about God? About God's sovereignty?

What does it teach us about Israel?

What does it teach us about ourselves?

9:1-2

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." (ESV)

Why?

Because

the "Jews are being set aside"

or

the Jews, Paul's kinsmen are not responding to the truth?

Paul goes to great lengths to defend his sorrow—perhaps because he was known as the Apostle to the Gentiles, Jews began to discount him.

⁸ René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked Power to Deliver* (Springfield, Missouri: 21st Century, 2005). 186.

⁹ I have been heavily influenced by a lesson by Gerry Breshears, given at Mars Hill Church, Seattle, Wednesday, November 10 2005. To listen to this lesson http://theresurgence.com/reformation_2004-11-10_breakout_session_audio_breshears-romans_9.

Also by Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). I've provide his introduction and explanation in the appendix at the end of these notes.

Most probably Paul expresses such grief because the honor and faithfulness of God are inextricably intertwined with the fate of Israel (Ellison 1966: 31). In Exod. 32–33 Moses interceded for Israel when God threatened to destroy them by reminding God that his name and honor were at stake in the fate of his people. Indeed, Paul’s lamentation is reminiscent of the OT prophets who expressed grief over the sin and exile of their people (cf. Jer. 4:19–21; 14:17–22; Dan. 9).¹⁰

9:3

Paul’s concern is Israel’s salvation.

Paul’s concern for Israel is so strong, that if he could take their place—if he could be cut off instead of them—he would.

In offering to become himself “cursed and cut off from Christ” for the sake of his fellow Jews, Paul implies that Israel herself stands under this judgment. By refusing to accept Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of God’s plan of redemption for them, most Jews have cut themselves off from God’s people and from the salvation he promises to his people. The Greek word for “cursed” is *anathema*, a word transliterated into English that describes someone who is excommunicated. In the New Testament, it refers to a person excluded from God’s people and under sentence of damnation (see 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Gal. 1:8 – 9).¹¹

Paul takes on a role here similar to that of Moses with respect to the people of Israel after their sin in worshipping the golden calf. Moses asks that God would blot his name out of “the book” if he would not forgive the people (Ex. 32:30–32). So also Paul is ready to sacrifice his own salvation for the sake of his “brothers,” the people of Israel who have not responded to the gospel.¹²

Aside: Have I (we) ever wanted to see someone come to Christ so fervently that we could say what Paul says?

What does this teach us about Paul’s passion for the gospel and people?

What do we need to do in order to have a greater compassion for the lost?

Do we see the lost (those without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ) as the enemy or the victim? An enemy we must overcome or a victim we must minister to?

Are we more concerned with the moral laws of our country or the eternal destiny of our neighbors?

9:4-5

In this section Paul lists some of the privileges of being a Jew.

the adoption,
 the glory,
 the covenants,
 the giving of the law,
 the worship,
 and the promises.

The 6 items in v. 4 have a rhyme pattern (the endings of the word -*α*, -*α*, -*αι*) and form couplets

the adoption	the giving of the law	<i>Exodus event (redemption) and giving of Law</i>
the glory	the worship	<i>The personal presence of God in the Tent and Temple</i>
the covenants	the promised	<i>The past blessing with future promise of blessing</i>

We must understand the relationship between the past blessings of Israel recounted in 9:4 and the future promises. It is not as if gifts in the past actually contain the promise of future

¹⁰Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 479.

¹¹ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 292.

¹² Douglas J. Moo, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Volume 3, Romans to Philemon*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan.) p.54.

blessing. The point is that the people upon whom God has lavished his favor in the past have also received saving promises with respect to the future. Thus the former gifts are not mere historical relics, for there is continuity between the past and the future. The God who chose Israel to be his children, gave them the law, manifested his glory among them, and to whom they had access in the cult promised them future salvation. Paul's sorrow over his people, therefore, cannot be ascribed merely to a keen sense of ethnic identity with his people. He grieves because ethnic Israel has been the beneficiary of God's goodness in the past and was promised a glorious future. These promises have not come to pass and thus they call into question God's righteousness. To see these privileges as passed on to the church badly misconstrues Paul's argument since his grief is due to the promises made to ethnic Israel (rightly Gutbrod, *TDNT* 3:387; Luz 1968: 273–74; Rese 1975: 219; Piper 1993: 30). The present tense verb εἰσιν (*eisin*, they are) indicates that the Jews still “are” Israelites and that all the blessings named still belong to them. It does not follow that all ethnic Jews without exception are saved because of the privileges itemized (Mussner 1984: 30, 32; rightly Cranford 1993: 37). Paul agonizes because many of his contemporaries are unsaved, even though God made saving promises to the nation as a whole.¹³

the patriarchs,

This term was virtually synonymous with the promises and covenants just described, which were given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This concept will be developed more in Romans 11.

Romans 11:28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. (ESV)

is the Christ

The fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs is the Messiah.

Paul communicates with the prepositional phrase ἐξ ὧν [ex hōn, from whom] instead of the simple ὧν [hōn, whose]. that the Messiah is not limited to nor under the control of Israel, even though he is descended from Israel (Harris 1992: 154). The phrase τὸ κατὰ σάρκα (*to kata sarka*, with reference to the flesh) introduces another limitation (BDF §266; BAGD 552). The Messiah is from Israel in terms of human descent and his ethnic status.¹⁴

The point of this list of privileges seems to heighten the contrast between the privileges of Israel and their present condition. And to contrast their privileged position in the past, to the present favor Gentiles are receiving.

But Paul will show that their privileges have not been set aside (9:6).

Please note that he is speaking specifically of ethnic Jews—“according to the flesh.” This is not a spiritual “Israel” but a physical, ethnic, national Israel.

But as Romans 9:5 states, the Messiah of Israel is God over all, “is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.” (ESV)

The idea communicated is one of universal sovereignty over all things, not merely his lordship over history (Käsemann 1980: 260) or over other creatures (Reicke, *TDNT* 5:889).²¹ Indeed, given the argument of Romans, “all” especially includes the Gentiles. The Messiah from Israel is the God over all, both Jews and Gentiles. He is not merely the God of the Jews; he is also the God of the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29–30). The paragraph concludes by highlighting the stunning nature of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as Messiah, for the Jews are separated “from the Messiah” (9:3), who is not merely ethnically descended from them but also the Lord of all and who even shares the divine nature.¹⁵

¹³Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 485.

¹⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 486.

²¹Rightly Harris 1992: 159. But Reicke sees the reference to be to God rather than to Christ.

¹⁵Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 489.

tn Or “the Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever,” or “the Messiah. God who is over all be blessed forever!” or “the Messiah who is over all. God be blessed forever!” The translational difficulty here is not text-critical in nature, but is a problem of punctuation. Since the genre of these opening verses of Romans 9 is a lament, it is probably best to take this as an affirmation of Christ’s deity (as the text renders it). Although the other renderings are possible, to see a note of praise to God at the end of this section seems strangely out of place. But for Paul to bring his lament to a crescendo (that is to say, his kinsmen had rejected *God* come in the flesh), thereby deepening his anguish, is wholly appropriate. This is also supported grammatically and stylistically: The phrase ὁ ὢν (*ho ōn*, “the one who is”) is most naturally taken as a phrase which modifies something in the preceding context, and Paul’s doxologies are always closely tied to the preceding context. For a detailed examination of this verse, see B. M. Metzger, “The Punctuation of ¹⁶

In the middle of doing this study, the door bell rang; Jehovah’s Witnesses were at my door. So, though this is definitely taking a detour, it seems so appropriate. What are just two of the many passages that teach the Deity of Christ.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (ESV)

tn Or “and what God was the Word was.” Colwell’s Rule is often invoked to support the translation of θεός (*theos*) as definite (“God”) rather than indefinite (“a god”) here. However, Colwell’s Rule merely *permits*, but does not demand, that a predicate nominative ahead of an equative verb be translated as definite rather than indefinite. Furthermore, Colwell’s Rule did not deal with a third possibility, that the anarthrous predicate noun may have more of a qualitative nuance when placed ahead of the verb. A definite meaning for the term is reflected in the traditional rendering “the word was God.” From a technical standpoint, though, it is preferable to see a qualitative aspect to anarthrous θεός in John 1:1c (*ExSyn* 266–69). Translations like the NEB, REB, and Moffatt are helpful in capturing the sense in John 1:1c, that the Word was fully deity in essence (just as much God as God the Father). However, in contemporary English “the Word was divine” (Moffatt) does not quite catch the meaning since “divine” as a descriptive term is not used in contemporary English exclusively of God. The translation “what God was the Word was” is perhaps the most nuanced rendering, conveying that everything God was in essence, the Word was too. This points to unity of essence between the Father and the Son without equating the persons. However, in surveying a number of native speakers of English, some of whom had formal theological training and some of whom did not, the editors concluded that the fine distinctions indicated by “what God was the Word was” would not be understood by many contemporary readers. Thus the translation “the Word was fully God” was chosen because it is more likely to convey the meaning to the average English reader that the *Logos* (which “became flesh and took up residence among us” in John 1:14 and is thereafter identified in the Fourth Gospel as Jesus) is one in essence with God the Father. The previous phrase, “the Word was with God,” shows that the *Logos* is distinct in person from God the Father.

sn *And the Word was fully God.* John’s theology consistently drives toward the conclusion that Jesus, the incarnate Word, is just as much God as God the Father. This can be seen, for example, in texts like John 10:30 (“The Father and I are one”), 17:11 (“so that they may be one just as we are one”), and 8:58 (“before Abraham came into existence, I am”). The construction in John 1:1c does not equate the Word with the *person* of God (this is ruled out by 1:1b, “the Word was with God”); rather it affirms that the Word and God are one in *essence*.¹⁷

Titus 2:13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (ESV)

Even the New World Translation (JW) has to translate this correctly, but JW’s focus on the “appearing” or “manifestation” as the NWT states.

¹⁶*The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ro 9:5.

NEB The New English Bible (1970)

REB Revised English Bible (1989)

Moffatt James Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible* (1926)

¹⁷*The NET Bible First Edition*, (Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006).

tn The terms “God and Savior” both refer to the same person, Jesus Christ. This is one of the clearest statements in the NT concerning the deity of Christ. The construction in Greek is known as the Granville Sharp rule, named after the English philanthropist-linguist who first clearly articulated the rule in 1798. Sharp pointed out that in the construction article-noun-καί-noun (where *καί* [*kaí*] = “and”), when two nouns are singular, personal, and common (i.e., not proper names), they *always* had the same referent. Illustrations such as “the friend and brother,” “the God and Father,” etc. abound in the NT to prove Sharp’s point. The only issue is whether terms such as “God” and “Savior” could be considered common nouns as opposed to proper names. Sharp and others who followed (such as T. F. Middleton in his masterful *The Doctrine of the Greek Article*) demonstrated that a proper name in Greek was one that could not be pluralized. Since both “God” (θεός, *theos*) and “savior” (σωτήρ, *sōtēr*) were occasionally found in the plural, they did not constitute proper names, and hence, do fit Sharp’s rule. Although there have been 200 years of attempts to dislodge Sharp’s rule, all attempts have been futile. Sharp’s rule stands vindicated after all the dust has settled. For more information on Sharp’s rule see *ExSyn* 270–78, esp. 276. See also 2 Pet 1:1 and Jude 4.¹⁸

Other passages¹⁹

Jesus Claimed Equality with God

Matt. 10:40; Matt. 11:27; Matt. 28:19; John 3:35; John 5:17–18, 22–23; John 6:62; John 8:19; John 8:58; John 10:30, 36–38; John 12:44–45; John 14:1, 7–11; John 15:23; John 16:28; John 17:10, 21–23

Jesus Is Considered Equal with God

Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 1:3; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 4:4–5; Eph. 6:23; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; Col. 2:9; Col. 3:1; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:16–17; 1 John 2:23; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 20:6; Rev. 22:3

For more information

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=555

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=4038

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=167

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=166

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=5030

http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=5398

Some individuals believe that the United States somehow has become the special people of God. We have been blessed immensely and have been used in the redemptive plan of God. We as a nation are not Israel, nor have we replaced Israel nor are we in the prophetic landscape described in Scripture. **And rather than claiming (or subconsciously believing) that we have a special place in God’s plan, we should be wary of pride and misplaced nationalism. It is easy in our democratic society, where we as Christians have “rights,” to forget that we are not primarily citizens of the United States, but that our citizenship is in heaven.**

Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (ESV)

We are here on a work visa—a temporary visa with a purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (ESV)

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (ESV)

As we work our way through Romans 9-11 we must understand of *whom* Paul is speaking. He is speaking of Israel—the chosen people, the nation of God.

Why had God chosen them?

When you read through the Old Testament, it becomes clear that Israel was chosen to be a

¹⁸ *The NET Bible First Edition*, (Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006).

¹⁹Walter A. Elwell and Douglas Buckwalter, *Topical Analysis of the Bible: With the New International Version*, Baker reference library (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1996, c1991).

blessing to the nations.²⁰

Genesis 12:1-3

Exodus 19:3-8

What were they like?

A people that often (“habitually” perhaps is a better word) sought to replace their God with the gods of their neighbors.

A people who were promised great blessings in keeping with their obedience, but who chose to rebel against the instructions of the Lord and received the promised curses.

Deuteronomy 28-29

Did they live up to what God wanted from them?

A people that rather than be a blessing to the nations, were arrogant in their “position” before God.

A people who were continually offered mercy—the opportunity to repent from their wickedness, with the assurance of blessing—but most often refused.

See Isaiah 1 and 43

In Isaiah 1 you see their rebellious condition and promise of forgiveness and blessing (1:18-20) and in Isaiah 43 you can see that disobedience results in discipline.²¹

Summary

God has a chosen people who have been given great privilege but who have turned their back the God. Does God abandon them?

Nowhere in the Old Testament do we see God abandon or reject His people. He disciplines them—but for the purpose of restoration.

God constantly extends mercy. So God, even when faced with sinful, hard-hearted people is persistent to bless them and doesn’t give up on His people.

This will be the message of Romans 9!

9:6-13

Interactive questions

If God is always faithful to His Word—why does it seem that He is not?
If God is faithful to His Word—why do we struggle to believe Him or, at times accept, what He says?



Talk about it

Then, in [9:6b – 29](#) he presents his first response to the problem of God’s faithfulness to his word of promise to Israel. It focuses on Israel’s past and explores the exact meaning and scope of that promise. Essentially, Paul wants to show that God never promised salvation to all of Israel. He has always chosen some from within national Israel to be his true people — what the prophets called a “remnant” (see [v. 27](#)). If, then, only a minority of Jews has responded to the gospel and joined God’s eschatological people, no contradiction with the Old Testament can be found.

²⁰ See Old Testament Survey lesson 27b which develops this concept and it’s connection to world missions.

²¹ Isaiah 43 is a very interesting chapter

43:1-7 God keeps His promise. Israel is His possession and will protect them.

43:8-13 God’s ability to keep them

43:14-21 God’s discipline to cause them to turn back to Him (their redeemer)

43:22-24 Israel’s failures. Empty ritual

43:25-28 God’s promise of full forgiveness

God constantly extends mercy. So God even when faced with sinful, hard hearted people is persistent to bless and doesn’t give up on His people.

Wow—that’s the message of Romans 9!

But Paul goes a step further. God has always reserved for himself the right to determine who his people will be; he is that kind of God, free and sovereign. That means that he can also invite Gentiles to join his eschatological people. Indeed, the Old Testament itself predicts this would happen.²²

9:6a God is faithful to His Word
But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

This is a reference to the promises of God, particularly the promise to save Israel.

This is the thesis of 9:6b–11:32

Point:

The unbelief of Israel does not nullify God's promises, because nothing can thwart his word; what he has promised will certainly come to pass.²³

9:6b-13

Main Point: A remnant within Israel

9:6b-9 A relationship with God is not based upon physical descent

Illustration # 1

Though both are decedents of Abraham, Isaac, not Ishmael, was the one to whom the promise was given.

Objection: But Ishmael's mother was Egyptian.

9:10-11 A relationship with God is not based on character or works

Illustration # 2

To counter the objection, Paul provides a second illustration.

Same parents, same conception, same birth—produce twins. God chose to give Jacob the promise.

The choice was completely God's.

Before they were born

Before they had done good or evil

Purpose stated

—in order that God's purpose of election might continue,
not because of works but because of him who calls—

One of the most perplexing problems that some people wrestle with is, How does God choose? On what basis does He select? The basic answer, as given in this passage, is that He chooses in His sovereignty, as He desires. Esau was the older brother. God's selection went counter to the law of primogeniture regarding inheritance (here, again, the inheritance of the blessing promised to Abraham). So, selection does not operate on the basis of human claims, merits, or expectation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26–27). We often hear it said, "He's so nice, he'd make a good Christian." God does not work that way. In the case of Jacob and Esau, selection operated before birth, so no human act at all conditioned it (not even an anticipated act that God would have known about ahead of time). Their destiny was settled before they were born and without reference to their character, abilities, or actions.

Is there a discernible goal in God's selecting? Why does He choose? The statement in v. 13, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (NIV) has seemed to be at variance with what we know from

²² Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 298.

²³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 491.

elsewhere concerning the character of God. Divine displeasure and disfavor is indicated here, but not malice or vindictiveness.⁵ God's controlling "purpose in election" (v. 11, NIV) is that some might become the objects of God's favor. He wants some to enjoy His special love. Beyond that, the Bible does not tell us why He selects the ones He does.²⁴

The wording underscores that God's promise to bless Jacob was both prior to and not based on any good works he did, and the exclusion of Esau should be estimated similarly: his evil works were not contemplated in advance as the reason for his exclusion.²¹ Whether or not Paul knew of the Jewish notion that Jacob was chosen because Esau was acting nefariously even in the womb, it is clear that he explicitly excludes such a view (cf. Odeberg, *TDNT* 2:953–54; Kuss 1957–78: 709; Käsemann 1980: 264) and counters the view of some Jews that the free will of human beings is ultimate (cf. Ps. Sol. 9.4–5; Sir. 15:11–20; 2 Bar. 54.15, 19; 85.7; *m. Abot* 3.16).²² The desire to rationalize the choice of Jacob over Esau is reflected in Jub. 35.13, where Isaac says, "Now I love Jacob more than Esau because he [Esau] has increasingly made his deeds evil. And he has no righteousness because all of his ways are injustice and violence" (Wintermute, *OTP* 2:123). Any attempt to explain the promise to Jacob on the basis of God's foresight of Jacob's good works turns the text upside down. Romans 9:12 reiterates the thought—the promise to Jacob and the exclusion of Esau were not based on works (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, *ouk ex ergōn*, not of works).²³ Nor is it convincing to say that predestination cannot be read into the text (so Sanday and Headlam 1902: 245; Fitzmyer 1993c: 562), for Paul says specifically that human works were excluded "in order that God's electing purpose should prevail" (v. 11), and he contrasts "calling" with "works" (v. 12), showing that the former is the ground of Jacob's inclusion (cf. Luz 1968: 70; Piper 1993: 52). This text forges a close connection between the themes of justification and predestination, implying that they are inseparable (Luz 1968: 72).^{24 25}

9:12-13

The first matter to decide is the meaning of the word "hate." Some think "hate" may mean simply, in Semitic fashion, "love less." But the Old Testament context points in a different direction. That context is clearly covenantal, so that "love" means, in effect, "choose," while "hate" means "reject."²⁶

One of the amazing and difficult parts of this concept is the connection between what God determines and how man accomplished it.

The passage clearly teaches that it was not an accident that Jacob became the heir of the promise. God selected him.

But how was this accomplished in history?

Parent's favoritism
Sibling rivalry



⁵ For further discussion see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 2:23.

²⁴ Paul S. Karleen, *The Handbook to Bible Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²¹ Contra Origen (per Gorday 1983: 77). Calvin (1960: 200) remarks that the text assumes that both Esau and Jacob as children of Adam were "sinners by nature." Pelagius (de Bruyn 1993: 116) contends that God chose Jacob instead of Esau because he foresaw that the former would exercise faith. Contra this view see Calvin 1960: 201.

²² Dunn remarks (1988b: 543) that to insert God's foresight of human works as a basis for God's choice, as some of the early church fathers did (cf. Chrysostom *Homilies on Romans* 16 [on Rom. 9:11–15]), turns the passage on its head.

Jub. Jubilees

OTP The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, edited by J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–85)

²³ Incidentally, ἔργα here should be understood in the broadest sense, for it is defined in verse 11 as "the doing of anything good or evil" (πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον). Contra Dunn (1988b: 543), who narrows it to "works of law."

²⁴ The road Augustine traveled in coming to his understanding of predestination in Rom. 9 is explained well by Babcock 1985; cf. also Gorday 1983: 166–74.

²⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 499.

²⁶ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 301.

Deceit and deception

God will accomplish His purpose.

Summary

I quote Moo at length here because he is able to take a complex issue and keep it simple.

What seems clear is that none of these texts says anything directly about the spiritual fate of the individuals Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, and Esau. The Old Testament does not — at least in these texts — reflect on whether they were saved or not; it is concerned solely with the roles they would play in salvation history. God’s election of them is not election to salvation but election to play a certain role in the unfolding plan of God. If Paul is using these texts in accordance with their original intent, he, too, must be reflecting on the way God has chosen certain people, or nations, to play positive and negative roles in salvation history. Isaac, Jacob, and Israel contributed to God’s plan by carrying on his promise. Ishmael, Esau, and Edom contributed also to that plan by opposing God and his people and giving God the opportunity to display his glory.²⁷

As we noted above, the Old Testament texts Paul cites may suggest he is thinking about the destiny of nations in history, not about that of individuals in the afterlife. Nevertheless, when all allowance is made for these points, I think that [9:6 – 13](#) does support a Calvinist view of election. Two points are particularly important.

(1) The words Paul uses throughout these verses are words that he elsewhere applies to the salvation of individuals:

Being “the offspring” (*sperma*) of Abraham ([9:7 – 8](#)) — cf. [4:13, 16, 18](#); [Gal. 3:16, 19, 29](#) (the only exception is [2 Cor. 11:22](#))

“Regarded [or reckoned] as” (*logizomai eis*) ([9:8](#)) — cf. [2:26](#); [4:3, 5, 9, 22](#) ([Gen. 15:6](#)); cf. also [Rom. 4:4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 23, 24](#); [Gal. 3:6](#) ([Gen. 15:6](#))

Being “the children of the promise” ([9:8](#)) — cf. [Gal. 4:28](#)

“Call” (*kaleo*), when God is the subject ([9:12](#); cf. [v. 7](#)) — cf. [8:30](#); [9:24 – 26](#); [1 Cor. 1:9](#); [7:15, 17 – 18, 20 – 22, 24](#); [Gal. 1:6, 15](#); [5:8, 13](#); [Eph. 4:1, 4](#); [Col. 3:15](#); [1 Thess. 2:12](#); [4:7](#); [5:24](#); [2 Thess. 2:14](#); [1 Tim. 6:12](#); [2 Tim. 1:9](#)

“Not by [or apart from] works” ([9:12](#)) — cf. [4:6](#); [9:32](#); [11:6](#); [Eph. 2:9](#)

Taken together, this complex of vocabulary points unmistakably to the issue of salvation. Contact with [Romans 4](#), where Paul shows how Abraham and his descendants were credited righteousness by their faith and not by their works, is particularly obvious.

(2) A reference to the way God saves individuals suits the context best. Paul is trying to show why there exists a spiritual Israel *within* physical Israel ([v. 6b](#)). Reference to God’s election of Israel as a nation does not serve this argument, nor does an analysis of the way God has used people in salvation history. What he seeks to show is that God’s promise to Israel never guaranteed salvation for all Jews. [Verses 6 – 13](#) advance this argument only if Paul is applying what he says there to the status of individual Jews. We agree, then, with the basic thesis of John Piper in his careful analysis of this passage: Paul uses the Old Testament story of God’s sovereign selection of Isaac and Jacob to establish a basic principle about the way God selects people. The language Paul uses and the context of the verses make it clear that he applies this principle to God’s election of individuals to salvation.

But, we rightly ask, how about my faith? Is it of no importance then? A meaningless, robotic response that God forces me to make? The Arminian has a legitimate protest at this point. Nevertheless, I don’t think we can smuggle faith into [verses 6 – 13](#) as the *basis* on which God chooses. Paul makes not just the negative point, that God does *not* choose on the basis of works, but the positive point also: He chooses based on his decision to choose ([v. 12a](#)).

Nevertheless, faith cannot be omitted from the salvation equation. However much we may want to claim that salvation is based on God’s choice, we must also insist that the human decision to believe is also both real and critical. We are not puppets in God’s hands, passively moving as he directs. We are responsible human beings, called by God to exercise faith in his Son. The evidence of Scripture compels us to maintain a fine balance at this point. The Bible teaches in passages such as [9:6 – 13](#) that God is the one who ultimately determines, by his own

²⁷ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p. 303.

free decision, who is to be saved. But it also teaches that every human being is called upon to respond to God's offer of salvation in faith.

Paul himself seeks to keep this balance in these chapters. In 9:6 – 29, he maintains that Israel is set aside because of God's decision. But in 9:30 – 10:21, he argues that Israel is set aside because she has willfully refused to believe. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation stand in some tension with one another, but they are not logically contradictory. To be truly biblical, we must carefully maintain a balance in which both are given full weight.²⁸

Implications/Application

We will see as we progress through Romans 9-11 that Paul will deal with difficult issues. God's sovereign decisions are not easy to understand and even at times hard to believe.

This passage gives us comfort in the midst of this difficult issue, that God is faithful to His Word. What He has said will happen. So in spite of our inability to understand and our tendency to question God, we are assured He will do what He has said.



What do we learn
About God?

Jesus is God

God is faithful to His Word

The central issue in the chapters is not predestination, nor is it even the salvation of Israel. At the forefront of Paul's thinking is God's faithfulness to his promises.²⁹



Act on it

What is the main point of the passage?

What does it teach us about God? About God's sovereignty?

What does it teach us about Israel?

What does it teach us about ourselves?

God is faithful to His Word.

God is sovereign and chooses based on His divine purpose, not the acts or potential acts of men.

God will be faithful to Israel, though not all Israel will be saved.

We must trust God, even when we don't understand.

²⁸ Douglas J. Moo, NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: *Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.) p.306-308.

²⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 469.

Appendix: Overview of Romans 9-11—Thomas R. Schreiner³⁰

If the Jews and Gentiles are both equally indicted in sin and have equal access to salvation through Christ, and if the blessings of the OT people of God are in the possession of the church (righteousness, reconciliation, sonship, the gift of the Spirit, the ability to keep the law, the promise of future salvation), then what does one make of the OT promises made to Israel qua Israel (see Byrne 1979: 127–28; Fitzmyer 1993c: 541; Stuhlmacher 1994: 144)? Have the promises simply been transferred to the church and is ethnic Israel left outside? If God's promises to Israel have not come to fruition, then how can one be sure that the great promises made to the church in Rom. 8 will be fulfilled?⁵ How could a righteous God transfer his promises from Israel to the church (so Thielman 1994a: 204)? Paul says that nothing will separate one from Christ's love and that those who are justified will be glorified. But God also chose Israel, and if his covenant promises to Israel were not realized, then how can one assert that they will be fulfilled for the church of God? The fundamental issue in Rom. 9–11, then, is not the place of Israel, though that is a crucial issue. The primary question relates to the faithfulness and righteousness of God (so E. Johnson 1995: 215). Is the God who made these saving promises to Israel faithful to his pledges?⁶ Thus, though the focus is on Israel here since it has strikingly fallen short of realizing God's promises, the text is not limited to Israel. Romans 9–11 emphasizes God's faithfulness to Israel and to the Gentiles, demonstrating in three movements that God's plan in history fulfills his promises.⁷

We should not miss in this survey the implications for the church in Rome. Gentile believers in Rome were tending to vaunt themselves over their Israelite brothers and sisters since the Jews were a minority and the Gentiles probably dominated the church. Paul writes this section to stave off Gentile pride by providing the larger theological backdrop to what was happening in Rome. It would be easy for Gentiles in Rome to conclude that the influx of Gentiles into the church and the minimal response from the Jews indicated the moral superiority of the former. Paul explains in this section why such a perspective badly misses the mark.⁸

The larger contours of the argument in chapters 9–11 should be sketched in briefly.⁹ What troubles Paul is that many of his fellow Jews are separated from Christ (*ἀνάθεμα ... ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, *anathema ... apo tou Christou*, 9:3), not enjoying the promises of God's saving righteousness that were pledged to them. The thesis of all of Rom. 9–11 then follows in 9:6a.¹⁰ "It is not as though the word of God has fallen." **The central issue in the chapters is not predestination, nor is it even the salvation of Israel. At the forefront of Paul's thinking is God's faithfulness to his promises.** Even though many Jews disbelieved in Christ, God's word of promise to them was not nullified or canceled. The reason why God's word has not fallen is explained in the first major section, 9:6b–29. Aletti (1987) may be right in detecting a chiasm in the argument.

- A Israel as the seed (9:6–9)
- B God's love for his chosen (9:10–13)

³⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 469-475.

⁵ So, e.g., Müller 1964: 54–55; Munck 1967: 35; Goppelt 1968: 181; Cranfield 1979: 447; Meeks 1990: 108–9; Gundry Volf 1990: 161–62; Piper 1993: 19; Gutbrod, *TDNT* 3:386.

⁶ Aageson (1986) illustrates that the Pauline argument in Rom. 9–11 is thoroughly infused with the OT both verbally and thematically, but he incorrectly discounts the theological dimensions of Paul's argumentation here. Similarly, in a subsequent article (1987) he insufficiently appreciates the redemptive historical cast of Paul's theology.

⁷ So E. Johnson 1989: 146–47; E. Johnson 1995: 219. Moo (1995) observes rightly that Johnson overemphasizes the theme of Gentile participation, for the primary theme is God's faithfulness to Israel.

⁸ Cf. Moo 1996: 552–53. I am unconvinced that Guerra (1990) is correct in asserting that Paul also defends his Gentile ministry before Jewish Christians in Rome. Evidence is lacking that they questioned the legitimacy of his calling to the Gentiles.

⁹ Some scholars have identified Paul's argument as midrash (cf. Ellis 1978: 218–19; Stegner 1984), and others as diatribe (cf. C. Dodd 1932: 148–49; Käsemann 1980: 261, 267). The diatribal style is certainly used, but identifying the argumentation as midrashic is questionable (so Chilton 1988: 31–32).

¹⁰ So Dahl 1977: 143; Cranfield 1979: 473; Wilckens 1980: 191; Jewett 1985: 344; Aletti 1987: 43 (*propositio*); Siegert 1985: 124; B. Meyer 1988: 1; Hafemann 1988: 43; M. Barth 1988: 8; Moo 1995: 246. W. Campbell (1981a: 27–28) sees it as the thesis of 9:6–29. E. Johnson (1995: 225) fails to see that the lack of salvation of Israel is the primary issue here, and Moo (1995: 252–53) is on target in his critique.

- C God's mercy, will, and power (9:14–18)
- C' God's mercy, will, and power (9:19–24)
- B' God's love (9:25–26)
- A' God's choice of Israel as his seed (9:27–29)

The A and B components of the chiasm focus on God's election, by which he chooses some in his love. The central section (C) defends God's justice in choosing some rather than others.

The substance of the argument is that salvation was never promised to every ethnic Israelite. There has always been a winnowing process: Isaac was chosen, not Ishmael; Jacob was chosen instead of Esau (9:6b–13). God has distributed his mercy in surprising ways, granting it to those least expected to receive it, for the eldest brother would be the natural heir to the promises in Jewish culture. The idea here is not only that God works in surprising ways but also that his will is effective and unstoppable. His promises must succeed because they are based on his electing purpose, which will surely come to pass. And God has decreed that a remnant of Israel will be saved and that the Gentiles will stream into the church. The election of Gentiles continues the theme of God doing the unexpected that was sounded in the case of Isaac and Jacob. In Paul's day Israel conceived of itself as the chosen of the Lord, while the Gentiles were on the outside. The mercy of God, though, cannot be neatly calculated from a human standpoint, for he is now lavishing it upon the Gentiles while the Jews are largely on the outside.

Romans 9:30–11:10 constitutes the second movement in the argument and it functions as a corollary to the first. In 9:6b–29 Paul emphasizes God's electing will, which sees to it that his promises are effectively secured. It would be a serious misreading of Paul if this were read in a fatalistic way that undermined human responsibility. Gentiles were streaming into the church and Jews were being excluded because of divine election, yet the same reality can also be perceived from another, complementary standpoint. Gentiles entered the people of God because they exercised faith in Jesus as Messiah, whereas the Jews did not place their faith in Christ because they failed to see that he was the fulfillment to which the OT law pointed and because they attempted to establish their own righteousness based on works instead of trusting in God's saving righteousness. Paul emphasizes that salvation is equally accessible to Jews and Gentiles by faith, and the Jews had ample opportunity to believe, since they heard the gospel. Indeed, they should have perceived in reading their Scriptures that God planned long ago to include the Gentiles in his saving righteousness. Instead, they resisted God's offer of salvation because of their obstinance.

I pause here to note that some scholars believe a contradiction exists between 9:6b–29 and 9:30–10:21. In the first text God's promises are said to be effective because they are based on his electing grace. Then in the second text Paul resorts to human responsibility or freedom as the reason why Israel was excluded. Is Paul casting around wildly looking for any answer, no matter how logically incompatible, that will satisfy his question regarding God's faithfulness? Obviously a full-length answer cannot be given here to the complex question relating to divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I would merely note that many philosophers are compatibilists and argue that human freedom is compatible with some form of determinism (see, e.g., Helm 1994). In the OT both blessings and curses, famines and feasts, joys and sorrows, floods and droughts, thunder and rain are all attributed to Yahweh. The OT teaches that human freedom operates under the umbrella of divine sovereignty. Of course, OT writers do not explain philosophically how God's sovereign control over every aspect of the world fits with human responsibility. Since God is the Creator, they presumably thought that it was in the nature of things that human freedom was always subsumed under divine sovereignty.

The conclusion of chapter 10 could give one the impression that no salvific response whatsoever is forthcoming from Israel and that all Israel is separated from God. Romans 11:1–6 restates the conclusion from chapter 9 that God has chosen a remnant of Israel to be saved in the present day, while the majority of Israel has been hardened by God so that they are not responsive to the gospel (11:7–10). Paul's argument could have concluded here: God's word has not fallen because he never promised salvation to the whole of ethnic Israel. In the selection of the remnant the faithfulness of God is illustrated and defended. Nonetheless, the subsequent verses (11:11–32) indicate that Paul was unsatisfied that the answer given thus far was a complete solution to the problem.¹¹ The notion that the majority of Israel stands outside God's saving righteousness cannot be the last word (v. 11) since the OT Scriptures pledge a glorious future for Israel and this is not fulfilled in a small remnant believing in Jesus as Messiah. Thus

¹¹ N. Walter (1984: 175) identifies 11:11–36 as a discrete section as well, though I separate 11:33–36 as the conclusion.

Paul maintains that the state that obtained when he wrote Romans is not permanent, for the majority of Israel will not always continue to resist the gospel. At this juncture Israel has been temporarily set aside so that the fullness of the Gentiles may enter in, but the inclusion of the Gentiles will eventually provoke Israel to jealousy and lead to their salvation. Currently, Gentiles from the wild olive tree are being grafted onto the olive tree of God's people. One should not conclude from this that the natural branches of the olive tree, ethnic Israelites, are amputated from God's favor forever. God will turn ungodliness from Jacob and promises that at the end of history, probably near the second coming, "all Israel will be saved" (11:26).

Some scholars detect a contradiction in the Pauline argument here, claiming that he has reintroduced ethnicity by positing a future salvation for ethnic Israel.¹² But the Pauline argument is more consistent and fitting than first meets the eye. God first chose Israel to be his people when they were a despised minority (Deut. 7). In the NT era Israel anticipated receiving the blessings of the coming age as God's chosen and favored people. God turned the tables on Israel by choosing despised Gentiles to be his own, showing that salvation was due to his mercy alone and not to any human prerogatives or distinctives. How astonishing it was to see Gentiles grafted onto the olive tree of Israel, the chosen people of God. Yet now that the Gentiles were grafted in, they faced precisely the same temptation. They were inclined to boast (Rom. 11:18–22) that God chose them over Israel and had laid aside the natural branches for their sake. How much better in God's eyes to be a Gentile than a Jew! This was the danger facing the Gentile community in Rome.

God will continue, however, to work in unexpected ways. It seems that he is finished with the Jews and has set his love upon the Gentiles only. But now Paul reveals that he has promised to save "all Israel" at the end of history. Romans 11:32 is the crucial text here. God has constructed the course of history to highlight the disobedience of both Gentiles and Jews. The salvation of the Jews demonstrates God's surprising mercy to them at the close of history. The objection that the future salvation of ethnic Israel contradicts Pauline theology elsewhere is initially plausible, but it fails to comprehend the depth of Pauline theology. God promised Israel eschatological salvation in the OT when they were weak and despised, because of his mercy and grace—not because of their ethnic background. So too, God will fulfill his promise to save Israel on the same basis, because of his mercy and grace—not because of their ethnic background. Piper (1993: 27) says rightly, "Therefore the fulfillment of a divine promise cannot properly be described as God's being unable to do otherwise because he is controlled by human circumstances; but rather the fulfillment of a divine promise is simply a climactic exercise of the same freedom in which God chose to make the promise in the first place." The wisdom and depth of God's plan wells up in Paul's heart and he praises this inscrutably wise God (11:33–36). That which he has planned he will bring to pass. He has planned human history in such a way that all will see that "from him and through him and to him are all things" (11:36). If the salvation of both Jew and Gentile is "from him" and "through him" and "to him," then it follows that he deserves all the glory (11:36). Thus the theme of Romans blazes into view again. God's saving righteousness and the way he works this out with respect to both Jews and Gentiles will bring honor and glory to his name.¹³

¹² Some scholars maintain that we must simply recognize that Paul's heart outran his head here and that the chapters are ultimately logically contradictory. See, e.g., C. Dodd 1932: 182–83; Dinkler 1956: 114–16; W. Davies 1977–78: 31–35; E. Sanders 1983: 192–99; N. Walter 1984: 173, 176; Räisänen 1988; Beker 1990: 45; Glancy 1991: 191; Donaldson 1993: 89; Boers 1994: 92, 139. Other scholars warn that the charge of contradiction is unlikely. See Thielman 1994b; E. Johnson 1995, esp. 235–37; Moo 1995: 240–41, 254–58.

¹³ Byrne (1996: 283) elevates a subsidiary theme "inclusion" into the major theme of this section.

Romans 9:1-13

1 I am speaking the truth in Christ—

I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

3 For I could wish that I myself

were accursed

and cut off from Christ

for the sake of my brothers,

my kinsmen according to the flesh.

4 They are Israelites,

and to them belong

the adoption,

the glory,

the covenants,

the giving of the law,

the worship,

and the promises.

5 To them belong

the patriarchs,

and from their race,

according to the flesh,

is the Christ

who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed.

For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

7 and not all are children of Abraham

because they are his offspring,

but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God,

but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

9 For this is what the promise said:

“About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”

10 And not only so,

but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man,

our forefather Isaac,

11 though they were not yet born

and had done nothing either good or bad

—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue,

not because of works but because of him who calls—

12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” (ESV)