

Romans 9

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Rom 9:1 “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,

Rom 9:2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,

Rom 9:4 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,

Rom 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

What anguish Paul was suffering for the sake of his brothers and sisters in the Jewish race! He understood clearly how God chose these people, saved them many times and then saved them from Egyptian slavery, led them to the promised land, gave His Commandments to them, established worship with them, led them into captivity, then brought them back to the land, had so much patience for them as He sent many prophets to them during their time when they deserted Him, etc. All of the many dealings that God had with His chosen people Paul understood very clearly and he loved them very much. He even loved them to the extent that he was willing to give up his freedom in Christ for them if he could do so. This is the same type of love that Jesus had for His people, but of course not to the extent of Jesus and Paul knew that his death would not save a single person whereas the death of Jesus saved many people. Paul knew that God had chosen these people as His people and that they rejected Him again when they rejected Jesus as the true Messiah. Paul did say that he “could” wish that he could take the payment for these people, but he knew that he actually would not be allowed to do so for he was just a human being who also had been chosen and saved by the work of Jesus.

Do you ever have this sort of feeling for some relatives or friends of your own? Perhaps your dad is not saved and you so wish that he would accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Do you have thoughts of wishing that you could somehow take the place of your dad to go to hell and your dad could take your place in heaven? Well, this thought is understandable but not acceptable. Why not? It is not acceptable because it shows a lack of trust in God. God is the One who chooses His people at the correct time and place. Some day He may still show that He has chosen your dad. But God is the Chooser and we are the chosen. We will see more of this later in this chapter.

But Paul has a deep understanding of God and how He works in this fallen world.

Rom 9:6 “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;

Rom 9:7 neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named."

Rom 9:8 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.”

This statement is also given by Paul in other verses:

Gal 3:7 “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.”

Gal 3:29 “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

Heb 2:16 “For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.”

The “ones who are of faith” are the ones to whom God has given faith so that they may become His children.

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 1:13 who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

These verses clarify Gal 3:29 because it is only those who have been given the faith to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior who are God’s true children and thus sons of Abraham in a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. It is only to the true children of Abraham that God gives the help needed to be born again. John 1:13 is also a clarification of Paul’s statement in Romans because although his fellow Jews were born of blood into the Jewish race, they were not all chosen to be God’s true children. Also we see in this statement through John that we do not become God’s true children by somehow deciding on our own will that we will choose God. It is only God who can instill humans with the faith needed to become the children of God; who will be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Praise God!

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

Rom 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;

Rom 9:11 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,

Rom 9:12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Rom 9:13 Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."”

Here we start getting into some rather “difficult to swallow” Scripture! God chose Jacob before he and Esau were born and the same is true of all of God’s children. He chose all of us before any of us were born. David understood this choosing of God as indicated in some of his writings.

Psa 22:9 "Yet Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breasts."

Psa 22:10 "Upon Thee I was cast from birth; Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb."

Psa 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth."

Psa 71:6 "By Thee I have been sustained from my birth; Thou art He who took me from my mother's womb; My praise is continually of Thee."

As these verses clearly state, David understood that God chose both those who would become His children and those who would not before they were born. Here our basic Arminianism or Pelagianism rears up its nasty head. We want to believe that we have a choice in our salvation and that God allows anyone ever born to also have this choice. Friend, if anyone is chosen by God for salvation then others are not chosen. Chosen means exactly what it says. We want to compare God's choices of people to our choices when we look at a basket of apples and we only take home the ones that look the best and leave the rest there. God does not look at a person's outside but He looks at the heart and only He can know which heart to chose before it even starts to beat.

The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah also clearly tell us the same truth:

Isa 44:2 "Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.'"

Isa 44:24 "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself, And spreading out the earth all alone,""

Isa 46:3 "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, You who have been borne by Me from birth, And have been carried from the womb;"

Isa 49:1 "Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me."

Isa 49:5 "And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength),"

Jer 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Certainly all of these verses make the same point that God chose His people before they were formed in the womb. We can take absolutely no credit for our being children of God. He chose us before He created the heavens and the earth. Someday the final child of God will be born and then the final end will begin to occur. Who is that final child of God to be born? None of us can know. We can only know that we are God's children and praise Him and give Him thanks forever and forever.

Paul also talks about his calling before he was born:

Gal 1:15 "But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased

Gal 1:16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

Gal 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus."

The revealing of Jesus in him did not occur until after he had helped stone Stephen, but the fact that he was a child of God was established before he was born. The time of the revelation of the fact to Paul did not occur until the proper time in God's eyes. Of course the same is true of all of us. We were all chosen to be God's children before we were born, but it was not revealed to us until later in the proper timing of God. To some the revealing occurred during the teen years, to some it did not occur until on the death bed, to some it did not occur until we were in our 30's, but the time of the revealing was perfect just as His calling us as His children before we were born was perfect timing. None of us can take any credit at all for being His children. We can only bow in adoration and praise to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Rom 9:14 "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Rom 9:15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

Rom 9:16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

If any of us will say to God that His choosing of only some is injustice then we had better search our own heart. Perfect justice for all of us just based upon ourselves would be eternity in hell. God chooses some to have justice and some to have mercy. He chose to have mercy on me and to have compassion on me. I do not know why he showed such mercy and compassion to me, but I know that He did. The last verse clearly states that God did not have mercy and compassion on me because of my wonderful reasoning ability or on any physical act of my own. God had mercy and showed compassion to me because He is God and He can do whatever He wants to do and all of His actions are in line with His character. God is Holy, Holy, Holy and He cannot commit any injustice.

Rom 9:17 "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."

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."

God chose one of his "unchosen" children, Pharaoh, to work through his actions to demonstrate His power so that His name would be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. We are told many times in the Old Testament of how God used evil people and evil empires to chastise His people. These people acted according to their own evil hearts and accomplished God's purposes, which were of course Holy. God did not have to

reward these evil people for doing the acts of their hearts to accomplish God's holy purposes! These people acted according to the following verse that we have already used:

Psa 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth."

The Pharaoh was one of these who were wicked from before birth because God so ordained it. As Romans 9:18 says, God has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires. People have made many attempts to soft pedal this verse and to say that God just allows the hardening of the heart to be completed because it was the choice of the Pharaoh to do so. This is Armenian thinking again, because Psa 58:3 clearly tells us that it was God who set the Pharaoh's heart before he was born. We cannot escape from double predestination, even though our "kind hearts" do not want to admit it. God is sovereign over everyone and over every event.

Paul unrelentingly continues this path:

Rom 9:19 "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

Rom 9:20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?

Rom 9:21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?

Rom 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Rom 9:23 And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Rom 9:24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."

We probably want to ask "how can God find fault in someone whom He has chosen from before birth to not be one of His children?" Of course God can find fault in any of us, but for some of us He has chosen to let Jesus take our sin punishment and He has given us the righteousness of Jesus. For others He lets them have justice for their actions. But none of us can question Holy God! Job learned this lesson the hard way and perhaps some of you have also learned this the hard way. I know that I had a very hard time with these verses a long time ago. I had trouble admitting that I in myself was a zero and that God could mold me in any way He chose. But then I realized all that we have been studying in Romans and I yielded myself to the master Potter. I can only give Him the praise. God has also endured much from the people that were destined for justice and prepared for destruction. What marvelous mercy and patience God has demonstrated over the thousands of years of His dealing with mankind! Verse 23 tells us why He did this for He has and will demonstrate to the world the vast riches of His glory as He will one day reveal all of His children in their glorified bodies when we all come back with

the Lord Jesus. Lastly Paul tells us that the chosen children come not just from the original chosen Jewish race, but from all races. Praise God!

Rom 9:25 "As He says also in Hosea, 'I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

Rom 9:26 "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God.'"

In Old Testament times, the Jews thought that they were the only special ones, but God later called His children forth from all of the races of the world. The Gentiles were hated by the Jews and treated as outcasts as were especially the Samaritans. But God calls forth His children from all of the peoples and there in the Promised Land, they shall be called sons of the living God.

Rom 9:27 "And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

Rom 9:28 for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, thoroughly and quickly. "

Rom 9:29 And just as Isaiah foretold, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, We would have become as Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah.'"

Certainly all of the earthly Jews have not and will not become children of God, but a remnant of the race will become God's children and receive the promise to Abraham but not because they were physically born into the Jewish race. God's word will be done on earth and it will be done in every way that He intends and it will be done quickly. If it were not for God's mercy all the towns and races of men would have been destroyed by Holy Fire. But God has chosen to have mercy on some people.

Rom 9:30 "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

Rom 9:31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.

Rom 9:32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,

Rom 9:33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.'"

Nobody achieves righteousness based upon their works or their birth (Rom 9:16). Just as Paul did and many people of his time, some people will think that they can please God by their actions alone, but that will never be true as we read these terrifying words from Jesus:

Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

Matt 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

Matt 7:23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

Nobody can achieve righteousness except by faith and it is only God who gives to His chosen people the faith required to believe and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

References

1. All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Moody Press, 1975.
2. James Montgomery Boice, "Romans, Volume 3, God and History", Romans 9 - 11, Baker Book House, 1993.
3. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "Romans, Exposition of Chapter 9, God's Sovereign Purpose", Banner of Truth Trust, 1 Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh EH12 6EL, 1991.