

The Letter of Paul to the Romans

Romans 9, 10 & 11

Paul Deals with Israel - Romans 9-11

Historically, people thought the "meat" of Romans was Chapters 1-8. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in Chapters 9-11.

Chapter 9: Description of a totally arbitrary God doing what God wants.

Chapter 10: Description of a totally arbitrary Israel doing what it wants.

Two ships passing in the night?

Chapter 11: Not two ships passing, but God and Israel working (mysteriously) in harmony.

Paul's Grief

The Unbelief of Israel - Romans 9:1-5

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 brethren, my kinsmen by race. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the **sonship**, the **glory**, the **covenants**, the giving of the **law**, the **worship**, and the **promises**; ⁵ to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the **Christ**. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.

Israel's Advantages

- 1. Children of God** - especially chosen (language is "adoption")
- 2. Glory** - The divine splendor of light; God's glory was revealed in the Exodus as God went before the people in a pillar of clouds and fire, crossing the Red Sea.
- 3. Covenants:**
 - Adam - tree of life
 - Noah - rainbow was sign
 - Abraham - circumcision was sign
 - Moses - law was sign
 - Jesus Christ - God's final covenant

4. Law.

5. Worship in the Temple - Midrash taught that "by 3 things the world is maintained":

- By the law
- By Temple worship
- By deeds of loving kindness

6. Promise - Messiah

7. Fathers' (Patriarch) tradition and history.

8. Appearance of **anointed one** (Messiah). Paul is heartbroken that Jews rejected their own chosen one.

God's Word Has Not Failed Romans 9:6-29

Paul summarizes Israel's history:

Patriarchs 9:7-13

The Exodus 9:14-18

Exile-Return of the Remnant 9:24-28

Coming of the Messiah 9:29

At each point in Israel's history Paul shows that **God chooses one person or group and not another, and he stresses the gracious and merciful character of God's election.**

Romans 9:8-13 - The Election of Israel Israel was Chosen for a Purpose

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 reckoned as descendants.

⁹ For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and **Sarah** shall have a son."

¹⁰ And not only so, but also when **Rebecca** 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 his call, ¹² she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Old Testament Examples of Election

Abraham

Two sons - blood descendants: **Ishmael** (son of slave Hagar) and **Isaac** (son of his wife, Sarah). Ishmael mocked Isaac, Sarah resented it and demanded that Hagar and her son be rejected and so it was. Isaac now alone inherited what belonged to the Father.

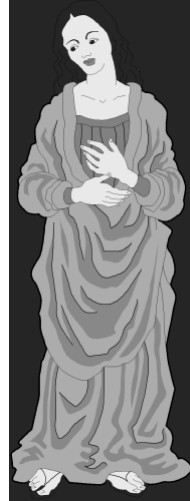
Point: **Both were elected, but like Isaac, the Christians now have the promise**

(thus, not all Jews chosen).

Old Testament Examples of Election

Rebecca (Isaac's wife)

When she is pregnant, she is told that she will have two sons who will each father a nation and "the elder will serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23) Twins are born (Esau and Jacob). **To Jacob goes the promise (election)** and Esau is rejected. Jacob's promise is to father the nation with 12 sons.



God is Sovereign

Election is major theme of Chapters 8-11. Election is by God's choice, by God's design, not because of works. Faith is response to election.

Paul establishes the freedom of God in grace.

Election takes place "in Christ"—we are elect in Christ.

Is God Capricious?

Romans 9:14-18

¹⁴ What shall we say then? **Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!** 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." ¹⁶ So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.

Is God Capricious?

God **appears** capricious in preceding verses (saves one brother, damns another). In Chapter 10 and 11, Paul explains that because all are sinners, **any act of God toward us is gracious** ... God does not need to save everyone to be just.

God's freedom/sovereignty Romans 9:14-18

To us, it is inconceivable that God chooses some and rejects others or that God would use Pharaoh as a puppet to destroy a nation. To the Jew it made complete sense—God is behind everything.

Paul's point: We cannot argue for justice from God because we are undeserving. Whatever we receive is grace and we must be grateful.

Strong Wine

¹⁶ So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy.

"This is very strong wine and the most complete meal, solid food for those who are perfect." (Luther on Romans 9:16)

Point of this discourse is to emphasize the divine election of individuals in history and to minimize or eliminate the place of the human will in order of salvation. (Mark Reasoner)

The Potter and the Clay

²⁰ But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me thus?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

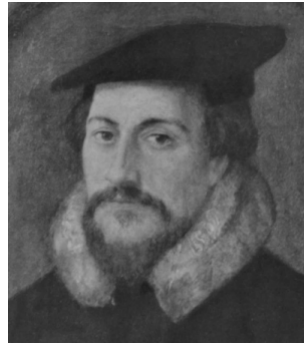
Can We Question God's Election?

Chapter 9 Summary

Paul begins by affirming the special **privileges** given to the people of Israel (v. 1-5). Then he says that being a member of true Israel is not a matter of heritage but **election**—God's process of election has nothing to do with merit or right (v. 6-13). Finally, Paul addresses the question: "Is God unjust?" (v. 14-29). Paul emphatically denies this and shows (v. 15) from Exodus 33:19 that election is an expression of **mercy**, though it means that he selects some (including those who ought to be punished) and rejects others (including those who would expect to be chosen).

Can We Question God?

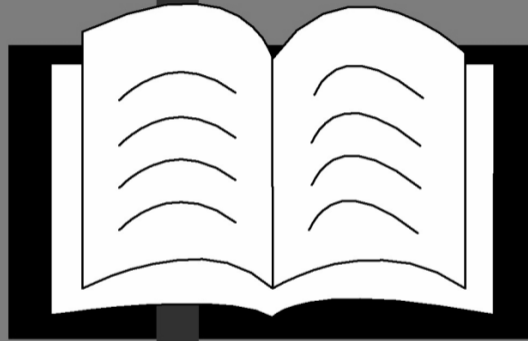
Calvin (and Augustine): We cannot question God's election. Rather than granting human freedom of any kind, he reasserts that God does not simply foreknow the future but determines it. The Potter-Clay explains that the artist is free to do as he chooses—to elect or to damn. **This is double pre-destination.**



Barth: Creation belongs to God so God may do whatever he chooses. However, Barth was very much against double-predestination. To be God is to be sovereign. To be human is to have been created by God with freedom to choose.

Contemporary: Affirms predestination while still holding to "choice/freedom" in some way. Some say don't read too much into this Potter-Clay analogy—Paul is heartbroken because some of his own family members and many of his fellow Jews do not believe. This is his explanation of why some believe and some do not.

Romans, Chapter 10



Why Did Israel Reject Their Messiah? Response: Chapter 10

¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is **that they may be saved.** ² I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. ⁴ **For Christ is the end of the law,** that every one who has faith may be justified.

The rejection of the Messiah because:

1. God ordained it.
2. Israel sought the right goal (pleasing God) by the wrong means (the law).

Note verse 1: " ... that they may be saved."
This is Paul's hope, that all of Israel will come to know the Messiah and receive salvation in His name.

Israel's Unbelief Inexcusable Romans 10:14-21

¹⁴ But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"

²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

The Righteousness of God is Greater than the Disobedience of Man

God has every reason to walk away and not look back, every reason but one, that is:

God's covenant love that will not give up on Israel no matter what.

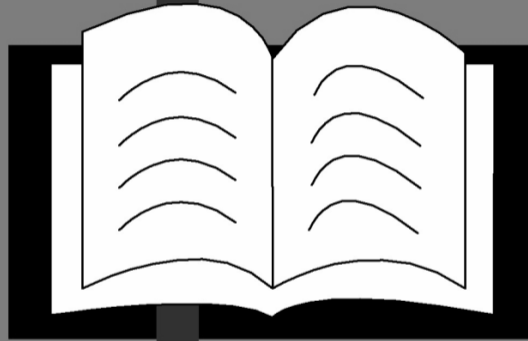
Chapter 10 Summary

The failure of the Jews was not only part of God's **plan** (9:6-26), but it was also a matter of their own **choice**. Paul demonstrates this by showing two ways of seeking God.

Jewish way: They seek to build an excess of merit, a credit balance of righteousness, thus putting God in one's debt and earning God's friendship. Of course, this can't work because of human sin.

Gentiles: Being suddenly confronted by the "amazing grace" of God as demonstrated in Jesus Christ, they simply responded in trusting obedience. Chapter 10 contrasts the way of works vs. the way of faith.

Romans, Chapter 11



What About the Jews? Chapter 11

"God will give them back the free exercise of their will so that, because their unbelief did not spring from malice but from error, they may be put right and afterward be saved ... Paul quotes from Isaiah in order to prove that God has reserved a gift for them, in order to teach that they can be set free by the same grace by which the believing Jews have already been set free, because he is not empty but always full of grace."

Ambrosiaster on Romans 11

The Remnant - The Story of Elijah

Romans 11:1-3

¹ I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Eli'jah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³ "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have demolished thy altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

Paul: Hoping Against Hope (4:18)

Romans 11:11-12

¹¹ So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

The Nation of Israel? or Christ—the New Israel?

Some argue that the restoration of Israel has already happened with the resurrection of Jesus, who is the new Israel. Since Jesus, the new Israel, has been raised by God from the dead. It is a sign for Paul that the Eschaton (the new age) is beginning and that the nations must learn to worship the God of Israel.

Romans 11:11-24 The Unfolding of God's Plan Is Israel out of the Race?

¹¹ So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

Matthew seems to say yes: (21:43) "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."

But this is not Paul's solution. He answers the question emphatically by saying, "Certainly not!" The defection of the Jews is temporary.

¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

Israel's return will be the last stage, the last act in the unfolding of the new age.

Israel Will Come Home!

Romans 11:25-32

²⁵ Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, ²⁶ **and so all Israel will be saved**; as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷ "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."



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. ²⁹ **For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.** ³⁰ Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. ³² For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.

Chapter 11 Summary

The theme of chapter 11 is stated in verse 2a: "**God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.**" Paul begins by saying that a remnant of Jewish believers already exists (v. 1-10). Then, looking at the unbelieving majority, he asserts that their exclusion will not last forever (v. 11-24). In verses 25-32 the mystery of God's divine plan for both Jew and Gentile is revealed. The chapter ends (v. 33-36) with a hymn of wonder and praise.

Doxology: The Praise of God

³³ O 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 for ever. Amen.

Christians and Jews The People of God

7 Affirmations—Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987

1. We affirm that the living God whom Christians worship is the same God who is worshipped and served by Jews. We bear witness that the God revealed in Jesus, a Jew, to be the Triune Lord of all, is the same one disclosed in the life and worship of Israel.

7 Affirmations–Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987

2. We affirm that the church, elected in Jesus Christ, has been engrafted into the people of God established by the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, Christians have not replaced Jews.

3. We affirm that both the church and the Jewish people are elected by God for witness to the world and that the relationship of the church to contemporary Jews is based on that gracious and irrevocable election of both.

7 Affirmations–Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987

4. We affirm that the reign of God is attested both by the continuing existence of the Jewish people and by the church's proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, when speaking with Jews about matters of faith, we must always acknowledge that Jews are already in a covenantal relationship with God.

7 Affirmations–Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987

5. We acknowledge in repentance the church's long and deep complicity in the proliferation of anti-Jewish attitudes and actions through its "teaching of contempt" for the Jews. Such teaching we now repudiate, together with the acts and attitudes which it generates.
6. We affirm the continuity of God's promise of land with the obligations of that promise to the people of Israel.

7 Affirmations–Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 1987

7. We affirm that Jews and Christians are partners in waiting. Christians see in Christ the redemption not yet fully visible in the world, and the Jews await the messianic redemption. Christians and Jews together await the final manifestation of God's promise of the peaceable kingdom.