

Romans

How to be a Christian without Being Religious!

Lesson 9

Romans 9:1-33

God's Sovereignty

1. Read Romans 9:1-5. Why did Paul feel such great sorrow for those of his own race?
2. What seven benefits did Paul list for being born a Jew? Clearly, God gave them much. They were His chosen people. In Moses' prayer, found in Deuteronomy 32:9-10, what phrase does Moses use in verse 10 to describe God's feelings towards the Jews (Zechariah 2:7-8)?
3. What does God expect from those who are entrusted with much (Luke 12:48)? How much have you been given in terms of spiritual benefits? (Consider where you live and perhaps the family you were born into).
4. According to Romans 9:5, who is Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15)? Give several phrases from these verses that describe Jesus' deity.
5. Read Romans 9:6-13. In these verses, Paul explains God's election of Israel. Even though Israel as a nation rejected Jesus as their Messiah, what does Paul have to say regarding God's Word?
6. For those not familiar with the birth of Abraham's two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, read the following: Genesis 15:1-6; Genesis 16 and Genesis 21:1-7. The NASV Bible translates Romans 9:7 (Genesis 21:12) as: "Through Isaac your descendants will be named." In other words, only the descendants of Isaac, not those of Ishmael, became the true physical descendants of Abraham who later formed the nation of Israel. Remember Isaac's son, Jacob, had 12 sons who became the nation of Israel. This is why Paul states, "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." Similarly, spiritually, not all of Abraham's children are God's children. Explain verse 8. How does one become a "child of God" (John 1:12)?

7. In vv. 10-13, Paul explains this mystery known as God's election. Paul uses Jacob and Esau to explain "divine election." Before Jacob and Esau were born to Isaac and Rebekah, God chose to work out His purposes through Jacob. (You can read about this in Genesis 25.) According to verse 11, did Jacob do anything to deserve being chosen? God's divine election is a mystery that our finite minds cannot grasp. Paul has already established that salvation comes by faith. One might consider this mystery like this: God's divine election stands before time and one's faith activates it. Read Ephesians 1:4,5 and 9; Colossians 3:12; I Thess. 1:4; and I Peter 1:1. How would you define "God's elect?"

8. In Romans 9:14-18, Paul explains **God's sovereign will**. Define the words **sovereign** and **will**. Paul asks a **question** regarding God's justice or righteousness in verse 14. What is it? Paul is simply reflecting on the fact that God chose Jacob over Esau and he also chose Moses over Pharaoh. How does Paul answer his own question (verse 15)? If God acted totally based on justice, what would man receive? But according to verse 16, what does man depend upon for salvation? What should be one's response when he realizes that God has had mercy upon him (Lamentations 3:22-23)?

9. Warren Wiersbe states in his commentary on Romans, "Election is always totally a matter of grace. If God acted only on the basis of righteousness, nobody would ever be saved... God is holy and must punish sin; but God is loving and desires to save sinners. If everybody is saved, it would deny His holiness; but if everybody is lost, it would deny His love. The solution to the problem is God's sovereign election."³ How do you define God's "sovereign election?" What does Paul have to say to those who complain about God's election in verses 19-21?

10. According to vv. 22-23, what are those who refuse God's grace called, and what are they called who receive God's grace? Do you believe that God is glorified when He reveals His wrath and power? Do you believe that God is glorified when He reveals His mercy and compassion? (Warren Wiesbe states, "In Moses and Israel God revealed the riches of His mercy; in Pharaoh and Egypt He revealed His power and wrath. Since neither deserved any mercy, God cannot be charged with injustice.")

11. Read Romans 9:24-29. Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23; Hosea 1:10; Isaiah 10:22 and Isaiah 1:9. In Romans 9:25, who do you think the Prophet Hosea

³ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1989), 544.

saw being called God's people? What does God call us (Gentiles) who believe according to verse 26 (Romans 8:14-16)?

12. What does Paul imply regarding the salvation of the nation of Israel in vv. 27-29? When you look at the nation of Israel today, do you see a nation of people that has accepted Jesus as their Messiah? On the other hand, are there Jews today who have?
13. Read Romans 9:30-33. Paul now moves from divine election to human responsibility. In these verses, Paul does not mention the "elect" or the "nonelect," but rather he emphasizes faith. What theme concerning righteousness does Paul come back to in verse 30? How did the Jews pursue this righteousness?
14. In verse 32-33, who does Paul refer to as the "stumbling stone?" Read Isaiah 8:13-14. When Isaiah looked into the future (he lived about 700 years before Jesus), He saw the coming Messiah causing men to stumble and fall. What do you think Isaiah meant (I Peter 2:4-8; Luke 20:9-19; and, I Cor. 1:18-25)?
15. According to verse 33, how does Paul define what it means to believe in Jesus?

God's sovereignty (divine election) and human responsibility (freewill) are both truths taught in Scripture. Warren Wiersbe states, "Nowhere does God ask us to choose between these two truths, because they both come from God and are a part of God's plan. They do not compete; they cooperate. The fact that we cannot fully understand how they work together does not deny the fact that they do. When a man asked Charles Spurgeon how he reconciled divine sovereignty and human responsibility, Spurgeon replied: "I never try to reconcile friends!"⁴

Dr. John MacArthur on this same subject states, "But we also know that, for His own sovereign reasons, God has elected us to be His children and, in His own time and way, brought us to saving faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we also know that our human will had a part in our salvation. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." That is the choice of God's will. But Jesus immediately went on to say that "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37). That is the choice of man's will, which God graciously accedes to for all who believe in His Son."⁵

⁴ Ibid. 546.

⁵ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-9*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). 37.