

**Homework:** Read through Romans 9 each day. Circle any words or phrases that you see frequently repeated. Mark what you think is the most important/key verse in Romans 9.

Notes

## Romans 9

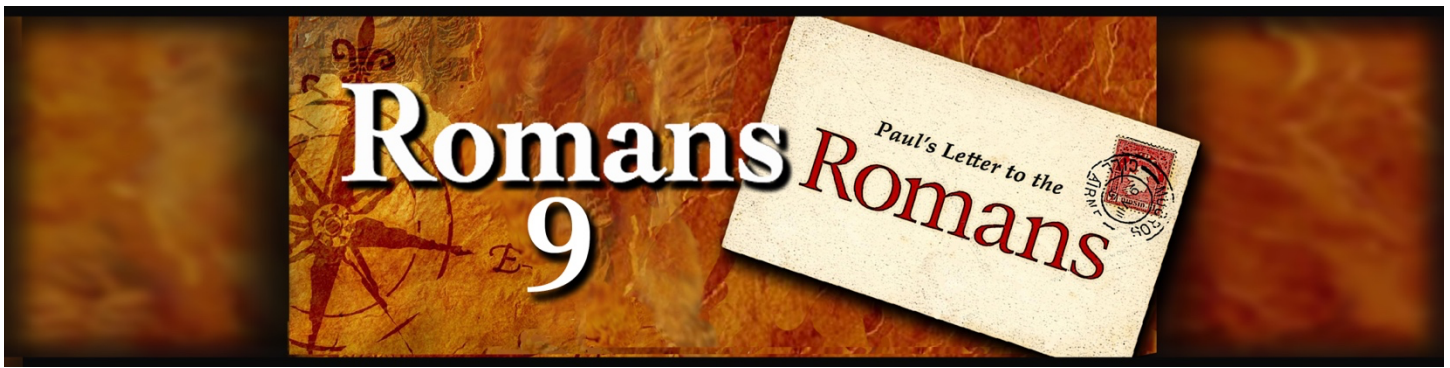
(ESV)

Chapter Title

<sup>1</sup> I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup> that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup> To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. <sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>10</sup> And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, <sup>11</sup> 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— <sup>12</sup> she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” <sup>13</sup> As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” <sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” <sup>16</sup> So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” <sup>18</sup> So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” <sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? <sup>22</sup> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> in order to make known the

riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—<sup>24</sup> even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?<sup>25</sup> As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”<sup>26</sup> “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called sons of the living God.”<sup>27</sup> And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,<sup>28</sup> for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”<sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah predicted, “If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.”<sup>30</sup> What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith;<sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law.<sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,<sup>33</sup> as it is written, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.



## REVIEW

Paul began Romans by surveying the spiritual condition of all people. He found Jews and Gentiles alike to be sinners, deserving of destruction, and in need of salvation. That salvation has been provided by God through Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross that can only be received by faith. (Romans 1-5)

Paul proceeded to show how believers are freed from sin, the law, and death—a provision made possible by their union with Christ in both His death and resurrection, and by the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 6-8)

As we forge ahead in Romans, Paul takes a three chapter “interlude” to attend to something that weighed deeply on his heart—the unbelief of Israel and her rejection of the Gospel. Although he was filled with the joy and assurance of his own salvation, that he could never be condemned because of his union with Christ, and that nothing could separate him from Christ and His love, he was deeply distressed (“*anguished*”) over the spiritual condition of his fellow Jews, a lost and doomed people. Yet, within these next three chapters, Paul shows that Israel, though presently in a state of unbelief, has a place in God’s sovereign redemptive plan, and the time will come when “*all Israel will be saved.*” (Romans 9-11) (NIVSB)

## Read Romans 9:1-3

God had called Israel to be His chosen people, **separate** and **holy to the Lord**, but they failed to fulfill that calling. God’s design was for them to be a light to the whole world, the Gentiles so that they, too, might know God. ([Genesis 18:18](#), [Isaiah 42:6](#), [Isaiah 49:6](#), [Isaiah 60:1-3](#)) Instead, the Israelites chased after foreign gods and betrayed the Lord and their calling from Him. The Father sent His Son to earth to call Israel to “*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*” (Matthew 4:17) However, when Jesus revealed Himself as the promised King who would restore Israel, they rejected Him. ([John 1:10-11](#), [Luke 19:41-44](#)) Jesus therefore appointed His disciples to fulfill Israel’s calling to bless the nations by preaching the Gospel to all nations until the end of the “Church Age,” which would allow for the conversion of the Gentiles. God knew from the beginning that Israel would fail to be that light to the nations of the world, that they would rebel against Him and reject the Messiah, yet He had already promised to restore His kingdom to Israel after they eventually repented. ([Deuteronomy 30:1-10](#)) (GQ-CGI)

For the time being, Israel is a secular, unbelieving nation, in rebellion against God because of their rejection of Christ. Certainly, some Jews are being saved and becoming members of the body of Christ through faith in their Messiah, but “**believing Israel**” consists of only a **remnant** (a small minority of people who remain faithful to God and are saved). ([Romans 11:5](#))

1. What does Paul say that he would be willing to do? (3) What does this mean? Is he able to do it? Why?
2. Who is Paul addressing in these verses?

Although Paul is the “*apostle to the Gentiles*” ([Romans 11:13-14](#)), he echoes similar thoughts to Moses when he faced the unbelief of the Jews at Mount Sinai ([Exodus 32:30-32](#)). The Israelites/Jews are his own countrymen, and he grieves for them. Hypothetically he was willing, if it were possible, to suffer God’s curse (judgment) for them—a strong statement of love for his people. Neither Moses nor Paul could in fact endure divine judgment on others’ behalf, since they themselves were sinners. Only Jesus, the Holy One, could rescue others from God’s curse by enduring that curse for others. (RSB) ([Galatians 3:13](#)).

**■** Paul did not give up his relationship to Christ, but he did give his life to make the Gospel known to the Jews. (CB)

3. For personal/private reflection: How much do we care about our family and close friends who are on the way to hell? To what lengths would **we** go?

### Read Romans 9:4-5

4. Where did the name “*Israelites*” come from? ([Genesis 32:28](#)) What is the significance of that name (hint: the meaning of his name)?

From Jacob/Israel, the nation of Israel got its name and description: “the people who struggle with God and overcome” (memorialized in the name *Israel*), and “the people who struggle with human beings and overcome” (memorialized in the name *Jacob*—[Genesis 25:19-28](#)). The name was used of the entire nation in the OT and between the OT and NT; later in NT times; Jews in the Holy Land used the title to indicate that they were the “chosen people of God.” The State of Israel is the official name of the modern country of Israel that was established on May 14, 1948 (and officially recognized by the U.S. that same day). Paul’s use of “Israel” here is especially fitting because he is about to show that even though Israel was unbelieving and disobedient, God’s promises to her are still valid. (NIVSB)

5. How do we see the **significance of the name *Israel*** today? (Hint—see previous paragraph)

Beginning in verse 4, Paul returns to the list of the advantages of being a Jew which he began in [Romans 3:1-2](#). (Is there any doubt that Paul has sentences and thoughts that are sometimes hard to follow?) 😊

## *The Advantages of being a Jew* (ESV)

1. To begin with, the Jews were \_\_\_\_\_ .  
([Romans 3:1-2](#))

## 2. To them belong \_\_\_\_\_, (9:4)

(LSB—"the adoption as sons") This **does not mean** that salvation is provided to every person who is born a Jew, but instead they have been sovereignly chosen as **an entire nation** to receive God's special calling, covenant, and blessing and to serve as His witness nation. (JMSB) As adopted "sons of God," they were specifically and distinctly separated from other peoples to be the "family of God." (JFB) ([Exodus 4:22](#), [Hosea 11:1](#))

## 3. \_\_\_\_\_,

**Glory** is the evidence of the presence of God among his people. (NIVSB) His glory was supremely present in the Most Holy Place in both the tabernacle and the temple, which served as the throne room of Yahweh, Israel's King. (JMSB) ([Exodus 16:10](#), [Leviticus 9:6](#))

## 4. \_\_\_\_\_,

A **covenant** is a legally binding promise, agreement, or contract. **All but one of God's covenants with humanity are eternal and unilateral**—that is, God promised to accomplish something based on **His own character**, and He would **fulfill it completely by Himself alone**. The person (or people) to whom He made the covenant had no role in the covenant; they were not responsible for any reciprocation. The covenant of law, the Mosaic law, is the only covenant which is **temporary** and **reciprocal** (each party to the covenant has obligations). Israel's obligation was to obey the law; their sin broke that covenant and was replaced by the new covenant, which is both eternal and unilateral—we play no role in our salvation. (JMSB) ([Hebrews 8:7-13](#))

*[For extra research if you wish: The six biblical covenants include (1) the covenant with Noah ([Gen. 9:8-17](#)), (2) the covenant with Abraham ([Gen. 12:1-3](#)), (3) the covenant of law given through Moses at Sinai ([Ex. 19-31](#)), (4) the Priestly covenant ([Num. 25:10-13](#)), (5) the covenant of an eternal kingdom through David's greatest Son ([2 Sam. 7:8-16](#)), and (6) the new covenant ([Jer. 31:31-34](#), [Ezek. 37:26](#)).]*

## 5. \_\_\_\_\_,

The Mosaic Law was given to Moses at Mount Sinai; the Jews justly deemed that possession of the Law was their special honor. As we have seen, the honor of possessing the Law was one of the major obstacles to the Jews receiving the Gospel. (JFB) ([Deuteronomy 26:18-19](#), [Psalm 147:19-20](#))

## 6. \_\_\_\_\_,

(LSB—"the temple service") Through Moses, God revealed the entire sacrificial and ceremonial system that provided the method for worship and communion with God. (JMSB) ([Exodus 29:43-46](#))

## 7. and \_\_\_\_\_.

This certainly **begins** with God's promises to Abraham when He called him. ([Genesis 12:1-3](#))

6. What promises did God make to Abraham in the Genesis 12 passage?

The promises also include all of the OT promises made to Israel concerning the Messiah, who would come out of Israel, bringing eternal life and an eternal kingdom. (JMSB) ([Acts 2:39, Acts 13:32-33, Galatians 3:16, 18, 21-22](#))

**8.** To them belong \_\_\_\_\_, (9:5)

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons, through whom God condescended (consciously descending from a superior position in order to do something for those in an “inferior” position) to name Himself, and through whom the promises of the Messiah would be fulfilled. (JMSB) ([Romans 11:28-32, Luke 20:37](#))

**9.** and from their race, according to the flesh, is \_\_\_\_\_, (NIV—“from them is traced the *human ancestry* of the Messiah.”) ([Romans 1:3](#)) See also Matthew 1:1-16.

Jesus Christ is “*God over all, forever praised!*” Paul declares that the **fullness** (all the divine powers and attributes) of the Godhead (the Trinity) **dwells in Christ bodily**, (RSB) ([Colossians 1:15-20](#)) and absolutely affirms the **sovereignty** and **deity** of Jesus. (JMSB)

### Read Romans 9:6-13

In Chapter 8 we studied the topics of **Divine Providence** and **Election/Predestination** rather extensively (pages 90-92 in the study if you need to review). Election (ἐκλεκτός *eklektos*) refers to the **salvation of individuals**. You might remember that Paul was addressing believers in the Roman church, those who are “in Christ.” Of course there were some Jewish believers in the church, but most were Gentile believers. Now in Chapter 9, although he doesn’t use the actual word “election” until verse 11, Paul continues the topic of election in **relationship to Israel**.

In the Old Testament, God made specific promises to the NATION of Israel, and He called them His “chosen people.” ([Deuteronomy 7:6-9](#)) One issue we must resolve with Israel as God’s chosen people is to ask, “In what sense was Israel chosen?” The answer is that OT Israel was chosen as God’s NATION, but not as God’s SAVED ONES. Some OT Jews, but not all, were **spiritually elect** (saved through Christ’s work), but He didn’t elect every Jew indiscriminately. He elected **individuals** WITHIN Israel, but **not EVERY Jew** without distinction. (GPL)

**7.** We just studied the advantages Israel possessed (see above—Romans 3:1-2 and 9:4-5). Is regeneration or the New Covenant one of those advantages?

God’s OT promises were to the NATION of Israel, but NATIONAL Israel rejected His Messiah, while INDIVIDUAL JEWS received Him. So, it *might appear* that the nation of Israel had forfeited those promises, that God’s Word had somehow failed (9:6a) to save the Jews—His promise and plan to be the God of Abraham’s seed as an **eternal covenant**. ([Genesis 17:7-8](#)) Paul seems to speculate, “How could God’s CHOSEN people reject His CHOSEN Son?” The answer in verse 6 is that the Word of God HAD NOT failed. (GPL) The rebellion of the Jews **could never cause God to break His promises** to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). ([2 Samuel 22:26-27, Isaiah 55:8-11](#)) Paul gives a detailed explanation of **why** God’s Word had **NOT failed**, using the example of Abraham and his offspring, drawing on numerous Old Testament passages, which the Jews **should** understand.



He states that *“not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring,”* clarifying that within Israel there is a distinction/separation between **believing Israel** and **unbelieving Israel**. Physical biological descent is no guarantee of a place in God’s **spiritual** family as true **“heirs of the promise.”** (NIVSB) Even the racial and national promises made to Abraham were not made to every physical descendant of Abraham, but only to those who came through the **promised son**, Isaac, not his first-born son, Ishmael, nor the unbelievers. ([Genesis 17:15-21](#), [Genesis 21:12](#)) Isaac was chosen as the heir to, and through whom, God’s covenant promises of blessing would be extended; (RSB) only Isaac’s believing descendants could truly be called the *“children of Abraham”* or *“Abraham’s offspring,”* the inheritors of those racial and national promises. (JMSB)

Verse 10 continues on to the next generation of *“Abraham’s offspring,”* Isaac’s sons. *“Not only that”* doesn’t mean that this example is greater or more important than the one before it, only that it is another example along the same line. *“Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac”* means that twins were conceived. ([Genesis 25:21-26](#)) Even though the events foretold in Genesis 25:23 would not take place for many years, before the twins (Jacob and Esau) were ever born, God told Rebekah that difficult times were coming, and some things would seem very upside down!

Notice that we have another parenthetical phrase in 9:11-12.

8. What is the main part of the sentence?

9. What is the parenthetical phrase?

*“In order that”* indicates that the information to follow explains **why** something is done, the **purpose** or **reason**.

10. What is the “something” that is being done? (Hint: What are the *results* of the last portion of the main part of the sentence?)

11. What is the purpose or reason why the “something” is done? (Hint: parenthetical phrase)

12. What was *“God’s purpose of election?”* (11b)

Before Rebekah’s children were even born, God had already made a choice. He chose who would be *“the child of the promise”* that would continue the line of *“Abraham’s offspring.”* God’s choice of Jacob, instead of Esau (technically the older), to continue the physical line was not based on Jacob’s (nor Esau’s) personal merit or inferiority; the choice of Jacob rested solely in God’s own **sovereign plan**. **Election to spiritual life is totally unrelated to any human effort**, and is based only on the **prerogative** (right, privilege) and **providence** of God. Simply put, God has chosen **some** Jews (not all) and **some** Gentiles (but not all) for salvation. (JMSB)



Verse 13 might cause us to cringe a bit because we like to think that “*God is love*,” which He definitely is, ([1 John 4:8](#)) so if “*God is love*,” how could He **hate** someone? Wouldn’t that be a contradiction? As we have worked our way through the first half of Romans, we’ve seen that God is **holy, righteous, and just** (among an abundance of other attributes). **All** of His actions and purposes flow out of **who He is**. To think of God as **only** love is thoroughly one dimensional. God IS wisdom, truth, **AND** wrath. ([Exodus 32:9-10, Deuteronomy 9:7-8, Romans 1:18, Revelation 16:1](#)) God doesn’t act like His attributes; He **IS** His attributes! (GPL)

Considering the fact that this entire section is dealing with election (context!), verse 13 could be seen as equivalent to “Jacob I chose, but Esau I rejected.” (NIVSB) John MacArthur explains, “Actual emotional hatred for Esau and his offspring is not the point here. Malachi ([Malachi 1:2-3](#)), who wrote this original declaration more than 1,500 years after their [Jacob’s and Esau’s] deaths, was looking back at these two men—and by extension the nations (Israel and Edom) that came from their descendants. **God chose one for divine blessing and protection**, and **the other He left to divine judgment**.” (JMSB)

“Hated” here cannot be reduced to “loved less” .... It must carry the sense of rejection and antipathy (hostility, distaste). (RSB)

### Read Romans 9:14-18

Once again, we see Paul’s well-known dialogue style of anticipating the criticism that some would have by asking a *provocative* question as an **emphasis** and **transition** from one topic (the examples of Abraham’s offspring) to the next section concerning God’s divine right and purpose for making choices according to **His will**, without consideration for a person’s “human choices.” Again, we see multiple OT references in his explanation.

**13.** What is the “*accusation*” or “*criticism*” against God that Paul brings up in 9:14?

Paul anticipates his readers’ possible objections to his theology by making **3 theoretical/hypothetical accusations** (*supposed* ideas or opinions that are not necessarily true or based on facts) (9:14, 19, 30); it is possible that someone *could* make these accusations, in fact, Paul probably heard these criticisms from many as he traveled from place to place.

### Three Theoretical Accusations/Objections to Paul’s Theology (Election)

**1.** The first objection/accusation is that if God were to **choose some people** for salvation and **pass over others apart from their merits or actions**, that would make God **arbitrary** (subjective and unpredictable) and downright unfair. (JMSB)

**14.** Does Paul agree with the first accusation?

Paul explains by citing two biblical texts, ([Exodus 33:19, Exodus 9:16](#)) from which he concludes that God is **righteous** in showing **mercy** (pity, compassion, kindness, and tolerance) to some while He **hardens the hearts of others**. When God shows mercy, it is not because a person has earned a reward by their own efforts, but God’s **sovereign free grace** is extended to people who are **wholly undeserving**, and who are **morally incapable** of any satisfactory effort on their own. (RSB) It truly is a gift from the loving hand of the Father.

I could have just as easily been “not chosen” as “chosen;” it doesn’t depend on me at all, only His Glory. (SL-DG)

God owes mercy to none, so there is no injustice when mercy is not shown. (RSB)

15. What is “it” in Romans 9:16?

16. What are the meanings of “*human will*” and “*exertion*?”

In the second OT text (Exodus 9:16), Paul moves forward to one of Abraham’s offspring, Moses, and his confrontation with Pharaoh just before the exodus of God’s chosen people out of Egypt. God boldly and rightfully declared through Moses that everything was going according to **His** sovereign plan.

17. What does God’s declaration imply about Pharaoh’s plan and purposes?

18. What were the two purposes for God creating Pharaoh and allowing him to become the king over Egypt? (17)

Without a doubt, Pharaoh believed his position and actions were of his **own** free choice to accomplish his **own purposes**, but in reality, he was there only to serve the purpose of the One who created him and put him in his position. Moses and Pharaoh were both wicked sinners, even murderers, and they were both equally deserving of God’s wrath and eternal punishment, however **Moses received mercy** while **Pharaoh received God’s judgment**, completely because that was God’s sovereign will. (JMSB)

19. What is Paul’s conclusion about God’s purposes in verse 18?

The Exodus passage (Exodus 7-14) says more than 20 times that either God “hardened” Pharaoh’s heart, or that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. (See “Pharaoh’s Heart” handout for specifics.) “Harden” means to make stubborn or obstinate. “This **does not mean** that God actively created unbelief or evil in Pharaoh’s heart but rather that he **withdrew all the divine influences** that **ordinarily acted as a restraint to sin** and **allowed** Pharaoh’s wicked heart to pursue its sin unabated.” (JMSB) In Exodus 10:16-17 Pharaoh begins to yield to the pressure of the judgments God was sending upon the Egyptians—“*Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, **only this once**, and plead with the LORD your God **only to remove this death from me.**” “But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.”* (Exodus 10:20) Pharaoh changed his mind. Yahweh “**gave Pharaoh over to his already evil desires** as an act of judgment” (RSB) (Romans 1:24, 26, 28); He basically left him to his own devices and evil impulses.

“God owes nothing to any sinner; a sinner who decides on their own to be good might well find God working against them, not in making them sin, but in refusing to allow them any sort of self-repentance.” (GPL)

## Read Romans 9:19-21

20. Who is “you” in this section?

21. Here we find our second “theoretical/hypothetical” *accusation* against God. What is it? (19)

22. Does Paul agree with the second hypothetical accusation?

## Three Theoretical Accusations/Objections to Paul’s Theology (Election)

2. The “Antagonist” in the dialogue is hypothetically saying, “If God determines whose heart is hardened and whose is not, how can He blame anyone for hardening their heart?” (NIVSB) “How can God blame anyone for sin and unbelief when He has sovereignly determined that person’s destiny?” (JMSB) If someone were to seriously make this accusation, it would proceed from two seriously mistaken beliefs:

1. They are a **moral free agent**, and **God wrongly imposes Himself on him**. In truth, we are **not moral free agents**, but **spiritual criminals**, and **God imposes nothing unfairly or unjustly**, His actions are ALL aimed at either **mercy** or **judgment**. (GPL)
2. They have a ridiculous sense of arrogance and self-importance! Paul immediately slaps this back with a strong warning against insulting or provoking God. In essence, he is saying, “You’d better not sass God! God don’t take no sass!” ([2 Chronicles 20:6](#), [Isaiah 45:9-10](#))

Paul’s reply to this accusation makes it clear that he is not talking about those who have **honest questions** about this (or other) difficult doctrine(s), but those who are attempting to use it to **justify or excuse their own sin and unbelief**, or those who want to make God **answerable to them** for what He does. (JMSB)

The OT references in verses 20-21 come from [Isaiah 29:16](#), [Isaiah 45:9](#), [Isaiah 64:8](#), and [Jeremiah 18:6](#). Isaiah, Jeremiah and Paul are definitely not talking about clay pottery; the vessels they are speaking about are human vessels, whom He has sovereignly created; as the Creator of all, He is the owner of all and has the right to make whatever He wants, whenever He wants, and however He wants to make it. Check [Genesis 2:7](#) to see an illuminating parallel between God and the potter! Paul contends that it is irrational and supremely arrogant for people to **question God’s choice** of *certain sinners* for salvation, as equally arrogant and illogical as a piece of clay or pottery questioning the purposes of the potter. (JMSB) In the same way that a potter chooses to use a large lump of clay to make multiple pieces of pottery, from which he makes “*one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use*,” God chooses to make certain **human vessels** for “*honorable use*” (salvation and glory) and others for “*dishonorable use*” (judgment and destruction). ([Proverbs 16:4](#)) Vessels for “*honorable use*” are those who have been set apart to God for use in **His service and to bring Him glory** ([2 Timothy 2:20-21](#)); however, even “*vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*” bring God glory when He demonstrates His patience and eventually His righteous judgment. God will ultimately be glorified by ALL His creation. (GPL)

## Read Romans 9:22-24

Verses 22-23 are an illustration of the principle in verse 21—that **God has the sovereign right to make some vessels for “honorable use” and others for “dishonorable use,” at His own discretion**.

God is not a shopper in a market who looks around and randomly CHOOSES certain vessels and not choosing other vessels, God is the potter who **MAKES** the vessels. He certainly doesn't make anyone a sinner ([James 1:13-15](#)), but He is under no obligation to RE-make sinners into saints. (GPL) The emphasis here is **God's mercy** in choosing, not **His wrath**. (NIVSB)

“What if God...” (22) does not mean that there is any question that God works according to His own will and choosing. The Greek word (εἰ ei) for the conjunction “if” makes this **a statement of fact** written in the form of a rhetorical question, and it also indicates that the other elements in the sentence are also true. The phrase “*desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power*” is a parenthetical phrase (hint: it's separated by commas) to give us more information about God's intent and motivation for doing what He does. Again, let's make sure we connect the two main parts of the sentence in verse 22. (Yes, the sentence continues, but we need to understand 22 before we connect it to 23 and 24.) 😊

**23.** What is the main part of verse 22, (the fact) not including the parenthetical phrase?

**24.** What has God **done** in the main part of the sentence in verse 22, and to **whom** has He done it?

Once again, Paul is using the word *vessels* to mean human beings, and these vessels are **destined** or appointed to a certain end. The “*vessels of wrath*” are destined for God's judgment, “*prepared for destruction*” (hell, eternal separation from God), meaning that they are “well suited or fitted for destruction;” they belong there. The “*vessels of wrath*” are also called the **reprobate** (see the article on “Predestination and Reprobation” from Romans 8 (PR-RSB)) God does not cause evil in the reprobate or prevent them from coming to faith. Many believe that the doctrine of election/predestination means that **God saves some who choose to believe and condemns others even if they choose to believe**. Let's be clear, **no one believes apart from the grace of God calling them and regenerating them**. ([John 6:44](#), [1 Corinthians 1:9](#)) The natural state of the human race is rebellion against God and loving sin. ([Romans 3:10-18](#), [John 3:19-20](#)) God will not reject someone who by faith believes in Him; He rejects those who reject Him. He never prevents someone from coming to faith. Rather, He **passes over** them, **leaving them** to pursue of their own sinful desires (He “gives them over.”—Romans 1). Even though they are destined for wrath, He has shown great patience with them by enduring their sinfulness instead of immediately destroying them.

Recall the first Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12). Each Jewish family was to take a spotless lamb, kill it, and put some of the blood on the doorposts and lintel of their home. Exodus 12:13 says, “*The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.*” This is basically election with reversed results—God did not **actively SAVE** the Jews from His judgment; instead, He **passively did not kill them** along with the Egyptians. In the same sense, God does not **actively cause** the wicked to sin; rather, **He passively leaves them as they are** while He actively accomplishes salvation in His people. (GPL)

**25.** Why has God shown such great patience towards them? ([Romans 2:4](#))

“God could justly destroy sinners the first time they sin. But he patiently endures their rebellion rather than giving them what every sin immediately deserves: eternal punishment.” (JMSB)

26. When will their destruction take place?

Now let's deal with the parenthetical phrase—"desiring to show his **wrath** and to make known his **power**." This *appears to be* a distinct contrast between the character or nature of God and the fact that He is enduring the "vessels of **wrath**" with **great patience**.



**Bible Study Techniques**

**Attributes of God (characteristics or descriptions of the nature of God and who He is)**—descriptions of what God is like, features that uniquely define who He is, the qualities of His character. For us to know God, we must know what God is like.

**Actions of God**—what God does or what actions He takes.

The Characteristics and Actions of God help us to understand more of who God is, how He operates in the universe, and what actions He takes toward us or on behalf of us.

"It is our knowledge of God that determines what we think, how we think, how we act, what we believe, how we worship, how we live, and how we invest our entire lives. The most important thing about you is what comes into your mind when you think about God." (SL-AG)

27. In verse 22, what are the characteristics or descriptions of God? (Mark them in the text of Romans 9)

28. In verse 22, what are the actions that God takes? (Mark them in the text of Romans 9)

29. What kind of contrast do you see here?

Romans 9:22-24 is a single (long) question. It isn't the same structure he has used in other questions (using a dialogue style with an "Antagonist" question, followed by his Answer, then his Argument or evidence to answer the question). Specifically, it seems that Paul leaves the conclusion unstated, but logically it would fall in line with his conclusions in verses 14 and 19. Pastor Greg Lawhorn's paraphrase of the question is, "What IF God patiently endures the wicked for the sake of the righteous? Will you accuse Him or deny Him the right to be God? Does that rob Him of any glory?" (GPL)

Finally, we can now combine the main phrase and the parenthetical phrase; it *might* look something like this Penny Paraphrase—"What if God decided to show great patience towards people that will someday end up in hell by not punishing them immediately? Even though He will put an end to their sinfulness and rebellion by bringing His wrath down upon them, revealing His righteous, holy power through judgment of their sin, in all this, He shows amazing patience towards them.'

Connecting verses 22 and 23 allows us to see a more complete picture of what God is doing by enduring the "vessels of wrath" with great patience, not immediately destroying them. Simply put, God is choosing to do **A** (22) in order to accomplish **B** (23)— **A** By showing great patience to the vessels of wrath, **B** He makes known "the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has **prepared** beforehand for glory." The Greek word "**prepared** for destruction" (καταρτίζω katartizō) is



not the same word as “**prepared** beforehand for glory” (προετοιμάζω proetoimazō). The second “**prepared**” is directly connected to “**beforehand**” as a **past action** that **focuses** intently on “**glory!**” The “**vessels of mercy**,” also called the **elect**, have been **predestined** and **prepared** for glory. (**Ephesians 1:3-6**) God has intervened in the lives of the elect to **positively** and **actively work** grace into their souls and bring them to saving faith. (PR-RSB)

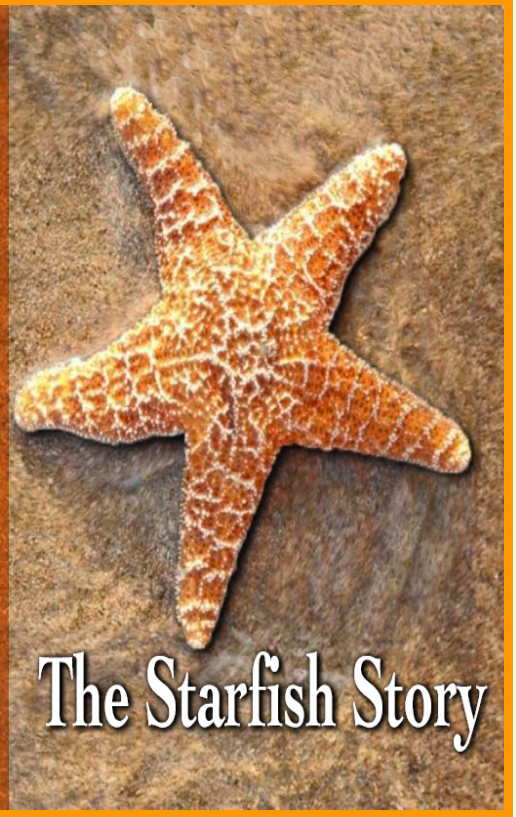
**30.** What additional characteristics of God and actions of God that you see in verse 23?

Most of you have probably seen this story; it could almost be called a parable. I was reminded of this story as I was thinking about predestination, reprobation, vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. I think it's an issue that most of us struggle with at some point. Don't take this story too literally—the young man doesn't come even close to representing God in this story, since God could **certainly** save **ALL** of the starfish, and He **could** certainly save every person. Yet He tells us that “...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” (Isaiah 55:8-9) Where this story could be a metaphor for God's plan of Election is that **ALL ARE** perishing, but He chose **SOME**, and “It made a difference to that one!”

Once a man was walking along a beach. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. Off in the distance he could see a person going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach. Back and forth this person went. As the man approached he could see that there were hundreds of starfish stranded on the sand as the result of the natural action of the tide.

The man was struck by the apparent futility of the task. There were far too many starfish. Many of them were sure to perish. As he approached, the person continued the task of picking up starfish one by one and throwing them into the surf.

As he came up to the young man he said, “You must be crazy. There are thousands of miles of beach covered with starfish. You can't possibly make a difference.” The young man looked at him. He then stooped down and picked up one more starfish and threw it back into the ocean. He turned back to the man and said, “It made a difference to that one!”



“Paul's point is that God has the right to have mercy on whom He chooses and harden whom He chooses, but that is different from asserting that God **chooses** some not to be saved. Paul isn't addressing *that* question; he is making a point about God's **sovereign authority**. Thus, if someone is not receiving a blessing because God didn't promise him that blessing, neither God nor His Word has failed. If He is indeed the Creator, He has the right to bless whom He will, and He has the right to harden whom He will. If He is the Potter, how He deals with vessels of wrath prepared for destruction is His prerogative.” (GQ-VW)

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

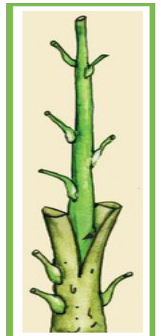
Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV)

It might be possible for us to catch a glimpse of understanding that God's gift of mercy to **some** certainly brings glory, honor, and praise to Him, but as 9:22-23 illustrates, God's gift of mercy to some and His judgment of others **equally bring glory, honor, and praise to Him**. ([Proverbs 16:4](#)) So, the issue is not that God chooses to send some people to hell, but that **all people are naturally headed for hell, and He chooses to save some**. No one is treated unfairly: some receive the justice they earn and deserve, and others graciously receive His mercy which they have done **NOTHING** to earn or deserve. ([Romans 6:23](#)) (JMSB, GPL)

As we mentioned in the introduction, the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah, so God rejected them (as a nation, His "chosen" people). Jesus described this in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. ([Luke 20:9-16](#)) Jesus chose to send out His disciples to fulfill Israel's calling by preaching the Gospel to all nations; He gave *"the vineyard to others"* [past] until the full number of the "called Gentiles" have been saved [future]. Now in Romans 9:24, Paul shifts his focus away from the Jews to introduce the **calling** of the Gentiles. The "called Gentiles" are **not a substitution** for the "rejected Jews." God has chosen one 'lump' of humanity and has rejected another 'lump' of humanity out of the **same Israel**, that is *"all Israel will be saved."* (JFB) [We will get to this in greater detail in Romans 11, but here is a preview—[Romans 11:25-27](#).] God's promise to **Abraham and his offspring** could not be fulfilled by substituting the Gentiles in place of the Jews. God's covenant with **Israel** is an **eternal covenant**. Israel's rejection is only **partial**, as we will see.

### Read Romans 9:25-29

In Romans 9:25-26, Paul quotes from Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10 in the OT to further explain giving *"the vineyard to others."* Hosea originally referred to the spiritual restoration of Israel in these two passages, but Paul is using them to demonstrate the profound truth that **"God is a saving, forgiving, restoring God, who delights to take those who are 'not my people' and make them 'my people.'"** (NIVSB) Paul then applies this principle to Gentiles, whom God makes His people by sovereignly **grafting them into covenant relationship**. ([1 Peter 2:9-10](#)) In 27-29 Paul reminds us that Isaiah grievously prophesied that the southern kingdom of Judah would be conquered and scattered—temporarily rejected by God—because of their unbelief, but the scattering Isaiah described was only a tiny preview of Israel's rejection of **the Messiah**, the burning of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Jews throughout the world. (JMSB) But Isaiah also foretold the **preservation of a "remnant"** (a left-over amount from a larger portion or piece), a small minority (of Jews) who would remain faithful to the Lord, who would survive from the great multitude of the Israelites, and in and through whom **the promises to Abraham would be fulfilled**. (JFB)



Isaiah (and Paul) remind us, in verses 27 and 28, of God's promise to Jacob ([Genesis 32:12, Isaiah 10:22-23](#)) to make his offspring *"as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered,"* and yet, *"only a remnant of them will be saved,"* implying that great multitudes of them would be "cast off," and "not be saved." If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost; and this was just the point Paul was endeavoring to establish. Out of that great multitude there will be so few left, making it fitting to say, that it was just a mere remnant. (BNC)

Verse 28 explains why only a remnant will remain—the Lord will carry out His sentence/judgment (destruction) upon the people of Israel for their unbelief. He had threatened to cut them off, now He promises to fulfill it, to put an end to it without delay. In this passage Paul reminds us that in the OT, at



various times, God destroyed many of the Jews for their sin; therefore, this was no new thing. God vowed to send His righteous vengeance against the sin and unbelief of the Jews by cutting them off, excluding them from the special privileges of the children of God, while saving the elect from among the Gentiles. (BNC)

The “Lord of Hosts” is an OT Hebrew name (σαβαώθ Sabaōth) for God, referring to His **all-encompassing sovereignty**. The “Lord Almighty” (NIV) or “Lord of Sabaōth” (LSB) is the Lord of the armies of Israel, the great armies of God, organized for war. (JMSB) This brings to mind the great hymn, declaring His name, Lord Sabaōth.



“A Mighty Fortress is our God”



Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;

**Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.**

Martin Luther

Only a small remnant ([Romans 11:5-8](#)) will survive from the great multitude of Israelites, likewise, only a remnant of Gentiles will be saved. Remember that the Gentile church does not **replace** national Israel; the Gentiles **are grafted into spiritual Israel** (believing Israel), just as God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations ([Genesis 17:4](#)). God’s calling includes both Jews and Gentiles (24), but the vast majority are Gentiles, as verse 30 suggests, but lest we think that the Gentiles have it all together, Matthew Henry asserts, “Even among the vast number of professing Christians it is to be feared that only a remnant will be saved.” (MHC)

Sodom and Gomorrah were cities in the eastern part of Judah that were destroyed (circa 1845 BC) when the Lord rained fire and brimstone on them. (Genesis 18-19) The cities were totally annihilated, so there is literally nothing to identify a specific location; some believe they are now covered by the Dead Sea. ([Genesis 19:23-29](#), [Deuteronomy 29:23](#), [Jeremiah 49:18](#)) The Israelites would be cut off, but not completely and not forever. As promised to the patriarchs, The Lord of Hosts left offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That remnant would still remain because of God’s great love for His people and His covenant with Abraham. (Genesis 12:1–3)



#### **Bible Study Techniques**

**Names of God**—Each of the many names of God describe a different aspect of His multi-faceted character. Pay attention to the names that the writers use for God and mark them in your Bible study or your Bible; pay attention to what you learn about God from His name. Pay particular attention to the names that God uses for Himself; that is a specific way that God reveals to us who He is.

**31.** What are the names of God that are used in Romans 9? What do they tell us about God?

**32.** What other names of God can you find in Romans 1-8? What do they tell us about who God is?

### Read Romans 9:30-33

**33.** Here Paul once again reverts to his dialogue style with an “Antagonist question,” followed by his Answer, and his Argument or evidence to answer the third “theoretical/hypothetical” *accusation* against God in Romans 9. What is the “Antagonist’s complaint?” (30-31)

### Three Theoretical Accusations/Objections to Paul’s Theology (Election)

**3.** According to the Penny Paraphrase, Paul is asking, “So, the Gentiles aren’t looking for God, and **they** find Him, but the Jews who have been pursuing God for thousands of years **DON’T** find Him? What’s up with that?”

**34.** What does our transition question (what then?) in verse 30 refer back to?

**35.** What did the elect Gentiles receive? How?

**36.** What did the people of Israel do? What was the result? Why?

As Paul concludes his lesson on **God’s divine choice through election**, he reminds his readers that, although God chooses some to receive his mercy, those who receive his judgment do so **not because of something God has done to them**, but because of **their own unwillingness to believe the gospel**. (**2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**). Sinners are condemned for their personal sins, the chief one being rejection of God the Father and Christ. (**John 8:21-24**) (JMSB)

Israel did not fail because she pursued *the wrong thing* (righteous standing before God), but because she pursued it in the wrong way, through works, believing she could obey the law to earn God’s favor rather than pursuing it by faith. Israel’s rejection clearly stems from the *nature* of her disobedience—she failed to obey the precious law that God had given only and specifically to Israel, the Law that **always** pointed to Christ. Israel pursued the law—but not by faith, by works. Therefore, the real cause of Israel’s rejection was that she failed to believe the Scriptures that foretold Christ’s coming, and rejected Him outright when He did arrive. God’s rejection of Israel was not arbitrary but was based on Israel’s rejection of God’s way of gaining righteousness—faith. (NIVSB)

Early in His ministry, Jesus Himself spoke of trusting in Him and His Word as “building a house on a **rock**.” (**Matthew 7:24-27**) Luke places “The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,” which we just read, during Jesus’ final week before His crucifixion. At the end of the parable, Jesus quotes from Psalm 118 which refers to the Messiah as “*the cornerstone*” and “*the stone that the builders rejected*.” (**Luke 20:17-18**) Twice in his epistles, Paul refers to Christ as a rock or a stone. **1 Corinthians 10:1-5** describes the rock that provided water in the wilderness as the Jews exited Egypt and wandered in the desert. He identified—“*the spiritual Rock that followed them... the Rock was Christ*.” Here in Romans 9:32-33, Paul combines two Messianic predictions from the OT (**Isaiah 8:14, Isaiah 28:16**) referring to Jesus as “*a stumbling stone*” and “*a rock of offense*” (σκάνδαλον skandalon). By combining these two predictions, Paul brings together both groups he is addressing—those to whom the Messiah would be only “*a stone of stumbling*,” [the “*vessels of wrath*”] and those who were to regard Him as “*the Cornerstone*” of all their hopes [“*vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory*”]. (JFB)

To those Jews seeking to establish their own righteousness on the basis of the law, Christ has been a stumbling stone over which they have fallen. (RSB)

In His "Parable of Laborers in the Vineyard" in [Matthew 20:1-16](#), Jesus reveals that the rejection of large numbers of His "chosen people," in order to bring in multitudes of 'offensive' Gentiles, would vividly reveal, on the judgment day, that "*the last will be first and the first last.*" (15-16) (JFB)

Matthew Henry states, "...we shall not be ashamed in that awful day, when all refuges of lies shall be swept away, and the Divine wrath shall overflow every hiding-place but that which God hath prepared in his own Son." (MHC)



### "Scandalon" by Michael Card

The seers and the prophets  
Had foretold it long ago  
That the long "Awaited One"  
Would make men stumble  
But they were looking for a king  
To conquer and to kill  
Who'd have ever thought He'd be  
So meek and humble

*He will be the Truth  
That will offend them one and all  
A stone that makes men stumble  
And a rock that makes them fall  
And many will be broken  
So that He can make them whole  
And many will be crushed  
And lose their own soul*

Along the path of life  
There lied the stubborn Scandalon  
And all who come this way  
Must be offended  
To some He is a barrier  
To others He's the way  
For all should know  
The scandal of believing

It seems today the Scandalon  
Offends no one at all  
The image we present  
Can be stepped over  
Could it be that we are like  
The others long ago  
Will we ever learn  
That all who come must stumble

**37.** What did you select as the Key Verse(s) in Romans 9? Why?

**38.** Create a **basic** outline for Romans 9.

**39. Write a summary of Romans 9.**

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