

SRMBC Family Bible Study

Romans: A New Lifestyle

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Lesson 12: The Potter & His Clay Romans 9:1 - 29

"I don't believe in Christ." It grieves us to hear these words. But when they come from close friends or family members, the pain can be unbearable. Why doesn't God open their hearts to the gospel? Why did he save us and not them?

Paul felt great pain and perplexity over Israel's unbelief. Their Messiah had come and they had rejected him. Why had God allowed this to happen? Had he rejected his people? In chapters 9-11 Paul wrestles with these questions. In this chapter, his answer focuses on the difficult subject of God's sovereignty.

Group Discussion: Ten people are guilty of exactly the same crime. The judge decides to pardon all but one, who serves the full sentence. How would you evaluate the judge's decision?

- First, I would have a question about the Judge's fairness (competence) about this decision.
- I could also say the Judge knows the law better than I do (Judge Dredd – "I Am the Law!") so I can trust his judgement.
- I could also have a problem with the Law and/or the Judge personally – maybe even anger.

Read Romans 9:1 – 14.

1. Why does Paul have great sorrow for the people of Israel (vv. 1-5)?

- Because they were his "peeps" (Paul also being a Jew/Hebrew). He is saddened for the nation of Israel in general, and his family members, in particular.
- The Israelites were the first to know of the one true God – given the scriptures that revealed adoption, the covenants, God's majesty, God's glory and character and all the promises – especially the coming of the Saviour
- They were ones from whose lineage Christ would come (Jesus was of Jewish lineage in the flesh – Matt. 1:1 – 17; John 4:9). He would come first to His people, but they did not receive Him.
- Christ is over all, but this one group who should be closest – are far away (Like when one child is a runaway).

Note: Paul's sadness and anguish over his lost brothers and sisters mirrors the heart of God. We in the church today need to have the same heart in order for us to be effective as ministers and ambassadors of the Gospel (Luke 15)

2. How do verses 6-13 demonstrate that God has not failed in his promises and purposes for Israel?

- Paul demonstrates that while not all the children of Israel are saved – the Word is still powerful and is right!
- The Word tells us there is a distinction – of those Israelite who where of God and who are not.
 - Children of the Promise through Abraham's son Isaac and not Ishmael
 - The promise continued through Issacs son Jacob not Esau (even though they were twins).
- All this take place not according the will of man – but by God's Sovereign choice – Election.
- God in His Sovereignty and Righteous judgement bestows his mercy on whomever He chooses.

Paul's point is that God has always chosen to fulfill his promises to some, not all, of Abraham's descendants. But he has never failed to fulfill his promises to those He has chosen.

The statement "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (v. 13) After all, doesn't God love everyone? The quote is from Malachi 1:2-3, where the context describes God's treatment of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, as opposed to his treatment of Jacob's descendants, the Israelites. The contrast is so great that it is like the difference between love and hate.

3. How do you respond to the idea of election (v. 11), God choosing certain people to be the objects of his mercy?

ELECTION. The act of choice whereby God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of his own appointment - who chooses on the basis of his sovereign will for his creation

- In election, God choses people to be saved from His condemned creation
- This choice is not based on any redeeming characteristics of the person elected, but on the Sovereignty of God
- This choice of election has been made by God – even before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4).

Note: The Bible also says that we are responsible for receiving Christ as Savior. If we believe in Jesus Christ we will be saved (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10). God knows who will be saved and God chooses who will be saved, and we must choose Christ in order to be saved. How these facts work together is impossible for a finite mind to comprehend (Romans 11:33-36)

Read Romans 9:15 – 29.

4. Many people feel it is unjust for God to choose some and not others (v. 14). In reply, why does Paul speak of God's mercy rather than his justice or injustice (vv. 15-18)?

- To underscore the fact that if we appeal to only God's justice – no one would be saved (Rom 3:23).
- To fill us with an appreciation for considering how sinful and vile we are that God would show anybody mercy.
- God elects by His Sovereign Choice and by His Sovereign choice, He shows mercy to some of His fallen creation.

A proper understanding of this doctrine should not result in questioning the justice of God, but instead in marveling at His great mercy. The question we really should ask is not why God chooses only some to salvation, but why He would choose any at all.

The Undeserving: A mother sought the pardon of her son from the first Napoleon. The emperor said it was his second offense, and justice demanded his death. "I don't ask for justice," demanded his mother, "I plead for mercy." "But," said the emperor, "he does not deserve mercy." "Sire," cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." "Well, then," said the emperor, "I will have mercy." And her son was saved

5. To what extent can you identify with the objection raised in verse 19?

Once again Paul anticipated the questioning response of his readers:

- Then why does God still blame us? – Why does He judge and punish – since we are “born this way?”
- For who resists His will? – it was God's will for me to sin and be a sinner.

These questions are still raised by those who reject the biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty. In His Sovereignty God makes the choices, and He can hold man responsible.

6. How does the illustration of the potter and clay help us gain a proper perspective (vv. 20-23)?

- Who do we think you are? God can do whatever he wants with his own creation
- God knows far more than we do and His purpose in shaping us is right
- God chief aim is to show His Glory through the working of His mighty Hands. This is His world, we are His creation and He can do whatever He pleases.

Obviously, a potter from the same pile takes some clay to form a finely shaped and decorated vase and takes other clay to make a cooking pot (cf. Jer. 18:4-6). And the clay has no right to complain! The sovereign Creator has the same authority over His creatures, especially in light of man's origin from dust (Gen. 2:7).

God Gets 100% - An ill-prepared college student taking an economics exam just before Christmas vacation wrote on his paper. "Only God knows the answers to these questions. Merry Christmas!" The professor graded the papers and wrote this note: "God gets 100, you get 0. Happy New Year!"

7. How are God's mercy and justice revealed in his treatment of the Gentiles and Jews (vv. 24-29)?

Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied from 785 to 725 B.C. Hosea was commanded to marry a harlot or, as he brutally stated the case, "a wife of whoredoms" (Hosea 1:2, KJV). He married Gomer, and she bore him two sons and a daughter. But God commanded him to take again this unfaithful harlot, to bring her back into his home, and to love her again.

It is the wonderful prophetic message from God to include the Gentiles [non-Jews] as His children as recorded also in Romans 9:25 and 1 Peter 2:10. But through His mercy and grace, He has provided Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him we are grafted into the tree of His people.

Gentiles

- While not originally chosen as God's people – now being called
- Grace and love for those who were outside of the "family of God"
- One even described as not being "My people" now, being Called the Children of God

Jews

- Although the nation is currently mired in unbelief - God will save a remnant
- The Lord promise through His word that He will save Israel – will come to pass
- We can have confidence that God will do what He says, because we have seen Him save Israel before.
- The fact that Israel is still standing and not destroyed (Like Sodom and Gomorrah) is a testament to God's continued grace and mercy.

8. As someone who once was separated from God and condemned, how do you respond to God's description of you as "my people," "my loved one" and "sons of the living God" (vv. 25-26)?

- **Gratefulness** – Thankful to God that we/I am called His people, despite my sin and shame.
- **Praise** – For the Grace and the Mercy of God toward me.
- **Worship** - Humble submission to the Awesomeness of this Great God that saved me.
- **Service** – My life, resources, time energy for Him to do all for His Glory.
- **Evangelism** – To tell others about the Glorious Salvation in Jesus Christ

Thank God for the fact that although he would have been perfectly just to condemn us all, he mercifully chose to save some.

Keys for Living



The Lord has not forgotten the people of Israel. He has a plan for their salvation. Since God has not forgotten His chosen people and we can also take comfort that He will never forget us.



Although it may grieve us that there are people close to us that are not yet saved – we need to take courage that God is in control.



No matter what you think of election – If we are saved, it is all because of Him. If we are not saved, the moment we hear the Gospel, we need to repent and receive Jesus by faith.