

Study 5-2 Romans 9 God's Sovereign Choice

While Romans 1-8 focused on explaining the need for all to receive a righteousness from God (Rom. 1:17), a righteousness that is only possible because of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-25), Romans chapters 9 to 11 speak about God choosing those He saves and the problem of Israel's rejection of the gospel. A main theme of chapters 9-11 is the unbelief of the Jews. How can the privileged people of God, those chosen to receive God's many promises, not believe the gospel? What of God's former covenant promises to the Jews? How do we reconcile Jewish unresponsiveness to Jesus Christ? What is God's future purpose for both Jews and non-Jews?

Read Romans 9:1-27

1. The apostle Paul does not hide his deep sorrow, anguish of heart, over the fact that many Jews refuse to trust Jesus. Why do you think this refusal affects Paul so much?
2. In verse 6 Paul writes, "It is not as though God's word had failed." How has God's word in relation to His purpose for Abraham and Abraham's descendants, not failed according to verses 6-13?
3. How do you understand the biblical concept of election (vs. 11), God choosing people to receive His mercy? Does election dismiss our freedom to choose God?
4. In response to "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden" (verse 18), the apostle Paul writes Romans 9:19. Do you identify with the objection raised in verse 19? How might verses 19-28 help us better understand election, God's mercy and God's sovereign choice?
5. Does the fact that God chooses those whom He gives His mercy to (vs. 15), the illustration of the potter and the clay (vs. 21) and the quotes from the prophets Hosea and Isaiah (vs. 25-29) help you better understand election? Explain

We often want clear black and white answers to our questions. God has graciously revealed Himself to us in His Word, but sometimes we struggle to understand Scripture. Election is a wonderful truth we can rest in. Our salvation is not based on our works, but thankfully on God's grace and mercy. At the same time the Bible also speaks about Freewill and the choices we make. How Election and Freewill "work" together is not easy to understand.

Spend time as a Life Group giving thanks to God for His election of you. Pray for those you know who do not yet follow Jesus. Look out for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

Notes

Question 2 - Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel (verse 6). Paul is not denying that God chose Israel as a nation, but he does point out that within Israel there are those who believe and those who do not believe. Salvation is not based on one's ancestry just as spiritual inheritance is not based on being the first born son (Esau was born before Jacob and yet Jacob received the promise God made to Abraham). God knows the human heart and each person must decide for themselves whether to follow and trust God or not.

Question 3: Election and Free Will

The biblical concept of election is that God has chosen us, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16) Election gives us great comfort and security knowing that our salvation is secure in God and is not based on what we do. However, the biblical doctrine of election also implies that some are selected, but not all. What about those who were not chosen? J. I Packer writes this about election: "The divine choice of sinners for salvation is an act of grace (Rom 11:5f), and is therefore free and unconditional (Eph. 1:9ff). If the Christian should ask, 'Why me?' the Bible answer is, because in his mercy God choose to. The choice precedes the existence of the persons chosen (Eph. 1:4); depends on nothing in them that would commend them to God, and leads to faith, rather than is the grounds of it (Acts 13:48; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2).

Election appears in the Bible in respect to: (a) the selection of Abraham and his family to be God's covenant people, (b) the selection of particular people for particular pieces of service, (c) the selection of certain individuals to bring them to salvation." Election dates from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3f; Rom 8:29f). God chose us 'in Christ' – that is, to be saved through what He did on the cross and our union with Him (Eph. 1:4).

Do we then need to be involved in evangelism if God has already chosen who He will save? Scripture teaches that God has chosen, not only whom He will save, but also the method by which He will save them – through faith in Christ. God's way of bringing about the salvation of His elect is to send someone to tell them the gospel (Romans 10:12-15). We are not to speculate on whether our friends are elect or not: we are to look simply at their need for Christ and to do all we can to meet that need. (Source: <https://www.walkingwithgiants.net/salvation/election/the-doctrine-of-election/>)

Together with election is the truth that people have free will. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve choose to disobey God. When we sin we are choosing to disobey God. People today choose to respond to God's call to follow Him. God the Holy Spirit speaks to people inviting them to believe. People choose to respond to God's invitation or not. Election, God's call, joins together with human will. Election and Free Will can be described as being two sides of the same coin. Though we do not completely understand how they work together, Scripture points to both. We hear God's call, we respond to His invitation to follow Him, we choose to continue to follow Him as the Holy Spirit helps us. All of this is a mix of God choosing us and we choosing Him. Someone suggested this story to help explain this mystery: As people look on the gates of heaven they read, "Whoever wishes may enter". And once they enter and look back they read the words, "Chosen before the foundations of the world".