

## Introduction

Many of you know that I love to plant and grow things, in the spiritual and also in the natural. In New Mexico, I planted eighteen fruit trees, thirty grape vines, and lots of different kinds of berries. Because of the severity of our winters, and the unpredictable weather we had, it was difficult to grow much. We had a 20-degree night on June 2 one year and I lost all of my trees and vines. Because I was pastoring a church, and working a full-time job that required me to travel thirty-four weeks a year, I did not even try to replant. I told Karen that I would like to move down in altitude one day so that I could garden again. That time has come and Karen and I bought a lot in Rome, Georgia. So, since one of my heart's desire is to plant fruit and nut trees and a vineyard, I have been planning my next vineyard and fruit orchard. I have taken soil samples and know what the pH of my soil is. I know the growing zone we are in, 7B, and I have made a spreadsheet with the pH, growing zone, and other requirements of various fruit trees, nut trees, vines, vegetables, flowering trees, and flowers. Then, Karen and I made a list of the trees that we want to have. Some of the big ones on Karen's list of trees were: pomegranates, figs, apples, pears, and elderberries. Some of the trees on my list that were not on her list were chestnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, cherries, and plums. I have been busy planning the layout, ordering the trees, and preparing to plant the orchard.

Our text today is entitled, God's Choice. Paul shares about his heart for the Jewish people, his kinsmen. He has a love for them, shown by his great sorrow and unceasing grief in his heart. He would do anything to see them come to know Christ. Just as I have a desire to plant and grow things, Paul has a desire to see his brethren come to Christ. Second, just as it was my choice what to plant in my orchard, Paul shares that it is God's choice of whom to show mercy to. Paul shares who the true people of promise are, and historically who the people of promise were. Third, Paul shares about how God makes His choice. Just as I made a choice of what I would include in my orchard, God made a choice who would be in His vineyard. For God, His vineyard was going to be planted with Jews and Gentiles that pursued Him by faith, not by works. The people who believed in the Christ, and received His righteousness by faith, were the children of promise. We are going to cover the first eighteen verses this week, and in Part 2 next week we will cover the remaining fifteen verses.

## God's Choice

1. Paul's heart for his fellow Jews (Rom 9:1-5)
2. The people of promise (Rom 9:6-29)
3. The basis of God's choice (Rom 9:30-33)

(Rom 9:1-18) "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, {2} that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. {3} For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, {4} who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, {5} whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. {6} But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; {7} nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." {8} That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. {9} For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." {10} And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; {11} for

though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, {12} it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." {13} Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." {14} What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! {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 then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. {17} For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." {18} So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."

### 1. Paul's heart for his fellow Jews (Rom 9:1-5)

Paul has been sharing a difficult message to his fellow Jews. In Romans 2, he told them that they are without excuse, and would be judged according to their deeds. They thought that because they were descendants of Abraham they had a free pass, and now he has told them that they are going to come under the wrath of God, just like the Gentiles.

(Rom 2:9-10) "*There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, {10} but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The Jews thought that because they had been given the oracles of God, the Law, that they were okay. Paul told them that even though they had the law, they were going to be judged. They would be judged according to the Law. The Law brought knowledge of sin, but did not justify them. He said that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Paul has taken down two of the three things they were trusting in.

(Rom 3:20) "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin."

(Rom 3:28) "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

Third, the Jews had relied on circumcision, the outward sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. Paul also struck down this false hope, telling them that true Jews are not those with an outward circumcision, but who had an inward circumcision of the heart.

(Rom 2:28-29) "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. {29} But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

In Romans 3, Paul had asked the question, "then what advantage has the Jew?" It would appear that Paul was against the Jews and was giving them a very hard and troubling message. It was a challenging message, a challenge to live by faith, like Abraham, rather than by works of the Law.

(Rom 3:1) "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?"

In Romans 9, Paul starts by sharing with them his heart for his fellow Jews. He said that he had great sorrow and unceasing grief in his heart because of the Jews. Next, he said that he wished he could be accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of his brethren. Can you see the love and burden that he has for his kinsmen according to the flesh? Paul had a love for his fellow Jews, and a burden for them. In Romans 10, he would share how his heart's desire and his prayer was for the salvation of the Jews. Paul really loved and cared about his fellow Jews.

(Rom 9:1-3) "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, {2} that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. {3} For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,"

(Rom 10:1) "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation."

Because of Paul's message, many Jews felt attacked and threatened by Paul. Paul was not attacking the Jews; he was praying for them and speaking the truth in love to them. Nevertheless, many Jews did not appreciate the message that he had. In Acts 21, Paul had just returned to Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). He met with James and the elders, telling them of the great things God had been doing. They warned Paul that the Jews had heard about him and that he was teaching all the Jews not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs. They counseled Paul to purify himself along with four men who were under a vow so that the Jews would know that he was not teaching people not to observe their customs. Even though Paul did this, he was mobbed by angry Jews, and he was saved by the Roman soldiers. I bring this up because the message that he was sharing was difficult for the Jews to hear. Paul shares his heart and love for the Jews so that they know he has no hard feelings towards his fellow Jews.

(Acts 21:21) "and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."

(Acts 21:35-36) "When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; {36} for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

Paul also tells the Jews how special they are. He said that the adoption as sons rightfully belongs to the Jews. The glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises had all been given to their forefathers. Not only this, but the Christ according to the flesh had come through the Jews. Paul has done two things to endear himself to his kinsmen; he has told them that of his love and burden for them, and second, how special they are.

(Rom 9:4-5) "who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, {5} whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

## 2. The people of promise (Rom 9:6-29)

After giving us his heart for his kinsmen, Paul then clarifies who the children of promise are, going all the way back to Abraham. He said that not all Israel who are descended from Israel. In

other words, not all of the Jews are the true Israel. Not all of the children are the people of promise, even though they are Abraham's descendants. The children of Ishmael are descendants of Abraham, but they were not the promised children; they are regarded as children of the flesh. Paul goes back to Genesis 21:12 where God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, and through Isaac his descendants would be named. Then, Paul quotes Genesis 18:10, where God promised a son through Sarah. Paul is giving a historical account of where the children of promise were promised. Let's go back to look at God's promise to Abraham about his descendants.

(Rom 9:6-9) "But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; {7} nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." {8} That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. {9} For this is the word of promise: "AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON."

In Genesis 12, the Lord spoke to Abraham, commanding him to leave his relatives and father's house to a land which God was going to show him. It became known as the promised land, a land flowing with milk and honey. God also said to him, "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing."

(Gen 12:1-2) "Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; {2} and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;"

Abram obeyed God and moved to the land which the Lord was going to give to Israel. He reiterated His promise to Abraham, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be." Abram believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. This is the verse that is used to prove that Abraham was the father of faith; he believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

(Gen 15:5-6) "And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." {6} Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

In Genesis 16, Abram and Sarai tried to take things into their own hands, and Sarai gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram to produce a son. Ishmael was born, but that was not the son of promise, that was a child of the flesh. In Galatians 4, Paul explains that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. The son of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. The blessing to Abraham was going to go through the son of the promise, Isaac, not the son of the flesh.

(Gal 4:22-23) "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. {23} But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise."

In Genesis 17, after Ishmael was born, God spoke to Abraham, saying that Sarah was going to have a child, and she would be a mother of nations. Abraham fell on his face and laughed. Abraham answered, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" But God answered saying, "No,

but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant.”

(Gen 17:15-21) “Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. {16} I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples will come from her." {17} Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child?*" {18} And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" {19} But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. {20} "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. {21} "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”

The name, Isaac, means laughter. When God told Abraham that his 90-year old wife would have a son, he fell on his face and laughed. When God told Sarah that she was going to have a son, she laughed. It was only fitting that this son was named, Laughter, as they both laughed at how this promise was going to be fulfilled.

(Gen 18:9-12) “Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." {10} He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. {11} Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. {12} Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

God had a plan to bless all the nations of the earth through the seed of Abraham. In Genesis 22:18, God said to Abraham, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” There was not seeds; it was the seed of Abraham. In Galatians 3:16, Paul taught that the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed, not seeds. There was one seed and that is Christ. God had a lineage in mind that the seed of Abraham, Christ, would pass down through so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed. It was God's choice who that seed would go down through; it could not go through different seeds. It could not go through both Ishmael and Isaac; it was God's choice to go through Isaac. In our passage today, many view the choice as individual election/salvation, but the choice of Isaac and Jacob was about the lineage of Christ, not individual election.

(Gen 22:18) “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

(Gal 3:16) “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.”

Paul's second historical example of God's choice was through Isaac's children, Jacob and Esau. In a similar way, the seed of Christ could not come through both Jacob and Esau. Rebekah conceived twins and when they were not even born and had not done anything good or bad, God made the choice that the promise would go through Jacob, and that the older would serve the younger. In the natural, Esau never served Jacob. God was not talking about Jacob and Esau; He

was speaking of the nations. There were two nations inside Rebekah's womb, and historically, the nation that came through Esau served Israel, the nation that came through Jacob. More importantly, the seed of Abraham, in which all the nations of the earth would be blessed, was going to be passed down through Jacob. That was God's choice.

(Rom 9:10-13) "And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; {11} for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, {12} it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." {13} Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED."

Last week I laid a framework for Romans 9 and said that God is a loving God. He does not hate anyone, much less hate Esau. We looked at Luke 14:26, where Jesus said that we cannot be His disciple unless we hate our father and mother and wife and children. God does not want us to hate anyone; so when He tells us that we cannot be His disciple unless we hate our mother and father and wife and children, He just means that we have to love God more than any other relationship. A better way to look at that is that God's love for Jacob was far greater because he was the one that the seed of Abraham was going to be passed down to the Christ.

(Luke 14:26) "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

I also took you back to Genesis 25:22, where the children inside of Rebekah were struggling together. When she inquired of the Lord, He told her that two nations were in her womb.

(Gen 25:22-23) "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. {23} The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger."

In verse fourteen, Paul asks, "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there?" Paul answers emphatically, "May it never be!" It was God's choice to choose who the seed of Christ would go through. It was His choice to choose Isaac and Jacob. There is no injustice with God.

(Rom 9:14-18) "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!"

Paul then uses a third historical example, Moses. God told Moses that He would have mercy on whom He wanted to have mercy. God would show compassion to those He wanted to show compassion to. It was not up to men for God to show mercy and compassion; this was God's choice. This is a critical verse in this difficult chapter. There are many who say that God created some people to be vessels of wrath, and He created some people to be vessels of mercy. They believe that God individually chose who would be saved and who would not be saved, and that man does not have any choice in this matter. They say that God will have mercy on those that He wants to show mercy and the rest will face the wrath of God, and that it is not up to man who wills to receive God's mercy.

(Rom 9:15-16) "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 then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

Last week we looked at a number of key principles. We saw that God loves all men. He did not hate Esau, and He does not hate anyone. God is holy, and He hates sin. He hates pride, rebellion, sexual immorality, lying, cheating, and all sin. But, God loves people. He loves sinners so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save the sinful world. Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. He was the propitiation for our sins, and not only our sins, but the sins of the world. We also saw that God does not desire for any to perish, but for all to be saved. I want to bring up one more verse that deals with the mercy of God. In Titus 2:11, Paul wrote, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." God's mercy or grace has appeared to bring salvation to all men, not to a select few. God's choice was about the seed of Christ being passed down from Abraham, it was not about individual election. God's mercy and forgiveness is available to all men. His salvation through the promised seed is available to all men. In Galatians 3, God tells us that we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. If we place our faith in Christ, we become Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

(Tit 2:11) "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,"

(Gal 3:26-29) "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus....{29} And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

Paul's next example is Pharaoh. God said that He raised up Pharaoh to demonstrate His power in him, so that His name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. Pharaoh had risen to the highest earthly throne, but he rejected God's mercy and made his own choices. Nine times Pharaoh hardened his heart before God. The only reason that God hardened Pharaoh's heart is that He did not override Pharaoh's will, who had already hardened his heart against God. Moses was sent to Pharaoh to release God's people. The various signs and miracles that Moses performed all related to the various false gods that the Egyptians worshipped. God showed Himself to be above all creation and in particular, the things that they were worshiping. Although this verse is interpreted by some that God hardens the heart of those that He has not chosen, that does not fit what the passage says. God wanted to demonstrate His power so that His name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. God wants the gospel message spread to all men. He is looking for those who will believe Him and receive His mercy. God gives mercy to those who believe God and receive His mercy. God will harden those who resist Him and His mercy. His grace or mercy has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.

(Rom 9:17-18) "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." {18} So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."

## Conclusion and Applications

In Romans 9, Paul shares his heart for his fellow Jews. He would do anything so that they would become the true sons of Abraham, children of promise. People do not become the children of promise by their heritage. Your parents do not determine whether you are a child of promise. It is

by receiving Christ the Messiah, the seed of Abraham, that we become Abraham's true descendants. We become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The seed of Abraham, which would bless all nations, was Christ. God sovereignly chose the lineage of Christ to go through Isaac and Jacob. We read about the complete genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1:1-17. It begins with, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers." The choice of that genealogy was God's. It was not up to the will of men to be a part of this genealogical record. Our passage today is not about God sovereignly choosing who will live and who will die; it is about His choice of the lineage of Christ.

(Matt 1:1-2) "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: {2} Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers."

The Jews, to whom the promise of adoption belongs, were not automatically included as Abraham's descendants. Abraham was the father of faith, and those who were true children of Abraham were those who believed God. We become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

There may be someone hearing or reading this that has never placed their faith in Christ. By the authority of the word of God, I can tell you that God does not want you or anyone else to perish. He wants all men to repent and to live. He did not create you to damn or destroy you. He has not chosen who will live and who will be sent to hell. Jesus was sent into the world to save the world, not to judge the world. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. God is a loving and merciful God, who has chosen to give His mercy to all those that will receive Christ. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins, and was raised from the dead by the Father, then I beg you to receive Him into your life today.

Jesus, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God. I believe that You are the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world. I believe that You died for our sins and were raised from the dead. I want to become part of the family of God, and a child of faith. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I receive Your mercy and forgiveness right now. I choose to follow You as my Lord and Savior from this day forth. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

The application for the rest of us is to share God's love and mercy to everyone. Paul began our text saying he would be accursed for the sake of his kinsmen. He was willing to do anything and everything to see his fellow Jews come to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 9, he said, "to the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may ball all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it." My question to each person is, what are you willing to do to see others come to Christ? What are you willing to do to see you kinsmen, your family members, your relatives come to Christ? What are you willing to do to see your fellow workers, your neighbors, the people in your life come to Christ.

(1 Cor 9:22-23) "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. {23} I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it."



**Introduction** (Rom 9:1-18)

- 1. Paul's heart for his fellow Jews** (Rom 9:1-5, 2:9-10, Rom 3:20, 3:28, 2:28-29, 3:1, 10:1, Acts 20:16, 21:21, 21:35-36)
  
- 2. The people of promise** (Rom 9:6-29, Gen 21:12, 12:1-2, 15:5-6, Gal 4:22-23, Gen 17:15-21, 18:9-12, 22:18, Gal 3:16, Luke 14:26, Gen 25:22-23, Tit 2:11, Gal 3:26-29)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Matt 1:1-2, 1 Cor 9:22-23)