

**Romans 9:1-18 Answers**  
**Jacob I Loved, Esau I Hated**

**Overview:** Romans has 16 chapters and 5 sections: Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Sovereignty and Service. Today we begin the fourth section on God's Sovereignty.

**Introduction:** In a quiet moment have you ever wondered why it is you believe in Jesus but your neighbor doesn't? Is it because you are smarter than he is? Wiser? More thoughtful? Inherently more sensitive to spiritual things? An intrinsically better person? Today we are going to find out the reason why!

**Context:** Paul concluded chapter 8 with a promise that nothing can ever separate us from the love of Christ. Just prior to this assurance, he gave us an unbreakable link in the chain of salvation.

ESV **Romans 8:29-30** . . . those whom he foreknew he also predestined . . . And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

He went on to promise that nothing can separate us from the Love of Christ.

The issue in Romans 9 seems to be God's trustworthiness. The Jews had been God's chosen Old Testament people, yet most of them had rejected their own Messiah. *Had God's plan failed? If so, what sort of basis for Christian hope is there? Has God now rejected the Jews? Might God reject the church later? If God was not faithful to Israel, could we trust him to be faithful to us?* The answer to Israel's rejection of the Messiah lies with the doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation (predestination). (Cranfield, p. 447).

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\*\*\***According to 9:1-5, what caused Paul great sorrow and unceasing anguish? See also 10:1.** Based on what he wrote in 9:2, Paul's sorrow and grief came from the fact that so many of his fellow Jews had rejected Jesus and the Messiah.

ESV **Romans 10:1** . . . my heart's desire and prayer to God . . . is that they may be saved.

**1. In 9:1, why do you suppose Paul went to such great lengths to assure his readers of the sincerity of his feelings (1) speaking truth in Christ, 2) not lying, 3) conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit)? See 5:7, 9:2.** **1)** Perhaps anti-Semitism was taking hold in the church at Rome (Ro 14, due to special days and diets). **2)** Perhaps people were accusing him of giving up evangelizing the Jews and instead concentrating on Gentiles. **3)** Perhaps he stated the sincerity of his feelings so strongly because of his bold statement that he wished he himself could be cut off from Christ for their sake (*anathema*, 9:3). Such love is very rare.

ESV **Romans 5:7** . . . one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die . . .

ESV **Exodus 32:31** So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people have sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will, forgive their sin — but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written."

**2. What can we learn about Paul's motive in evangelism from 9:3?** Paul's motive was great love. Many American street evangelists project anger when they preach. It is as if they are harsh prophets condemning those around them. Paul's motive clearly was his great love for his fellow Jew. It has been said that people won't care how much you know until they know how much you care. No one could rightly accuse Paul of not caring.

**Application:** Following Paul's example, feeling such grief toward unbelieving Jews is the attitude every Christian should have (Cranfield, p. 454).

**What eight facts did Paul bring out about Israelites in 9:4-5?** To the Israelites belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises, the patriarchs and the Christ.

ESV **Romans 3:1-2** . . . what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

**3. Specifically to what do each of these items listed in 9:4-5 refer?** Adoption refers to God adopting them as His own unique people; glory likely refers to the *shekinah* glory of the tabernacle and temple; the covenants are the contacts between God and the Jewish people (Abrahamic, Sinai); the law is the law given through Moses at Mount Sinai; the worship concerns the Levitical regulations; the promises are especially those made to Abraham (land, seed, blessing); the patriarchs are such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph); the Christ of course was descended from Israel (Jacob).

**4. What can we learn about Jesus from 9:5?** Jesus is descended from Israel (Jacob), He is the Christ and He is "God over all". Buda did not claim to be God, nor did Mohammed. However, Christians worship Jesus as God.

**5. What paradox is evident in 9:1-5?** From the Israelite race, despite all their blessings from God, did not recognize Jesus as their Christ.

ESV **John 1:11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

**Synthesis:** On the surface it appeared that God's promises to the Israelites had failed. Despite all God has done for them, they still rejected Jesus as the Messiah (Christ). To help the church in Rome get a better understanding of God's sovereignty and the fact that God's promises had not failed, Paul wrote the rest of chapter 9 and 10 and 11.

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\*\*\*\***What two types of children does Abraham have (9:6-13)?** Abraham has children of the flesh and children of the promise. Not all who make up physically Israel belong to spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel lies within physical Israel. Throughout Jewish history we see again and again a process of selection at work. Not all Hebrews were within the purpose and design of God (Barclay, p. 134-135).

Example: Draw a small circle within a large circle. The large circle is physical Israel. The small circle are those physical Israelites who are also spiritual Israelites.

ESV **Romans 2:28-29** . . . no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.

**6. Why is it not as though the word of God has failed (9:6)?** See *Romans 2:28-29, 3:3, 4:12*. God's gave His word, His promise, to Abraham and the children of promise, not simply to all Abraham's physical children.

ESV **Romans 3:3** What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

**According to 9:6, not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. There was an actual man named Israel. What was his other name?** See *Genesis 32:28*. His other name was Jacob.

**Who's Who:** Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Isaac and Rebekah gave birth to twins: Jacob (alias Israel) and Esau: Abraham > Isaac > Jacob.

**How many sons did Israel (Jacob) have (9:6)?** Israel had twelve sons, whose descendants became the twelve tribes of Israel. Paul's point here is even though Israel had many physical descendants, but not all of them were his spiritual descendants. They were all children of Israel, but they were not all children of God. They were all children of the flesh, but they were not all children of the promise.

**7. What was Paul's point about Abraham and his son Isaac (9:7-9)?** God's promises were to Abraham's offspring through his wife Sarah but not through any other woman (Hagar).

**History:**

**Who was Abraham's first son?** Abraham's first son was Ishmael, father of the Arabs. The mother was Hagar (not Sarah).

**Who was Abraham's second son?** His second son was Isaac, father of the Israelites. The mother was Sarah.

**Did Abraham have any other physical offspring?** After Sarah died, Abraham had six more sons, through Keturah.

ESV **Genesis 25:1-2** Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

**8. Isaac was called a son of promise. What promise (9:8-9)?** See 4:19. Abraham's wife Sarah had been barren all their married life. Then, long past the time she would have been able to bear children even if not barren, God promised they would have a son (Isaac). Isaac's was not a virgin birth but it was a miracle birth!

ESV **Romans 4:19** [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.

**Review: According to 9:8, which of Abraham's children qualified as children of promise?** Only those descended from Isaac were children of promise. There was a selection process by God.

**9. From the context surrounding 9:8-9, which child of the flesh was not a child of promise?** See *Genesis 17:15-21*. Ishmael was not a child of promise (since Hagar and not Sarah was the mother) and thus had no claim to God's promises to Abraham made in *Genesis 12* (land, seed, blessing). Ishmael went on to father the Arab peoples.

**First Proof:** Not all physical descendants of Abraham were children of promise. God made a choice between Isaac (and thus the Israelites) and Ishmael (and thus the Arabs). Here then is the first proof that not all physical descendants of Abraham are to be included in God's promise (Barclay, p. 135).

**Truth: Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. Isaac and Ishmael prove this; God picked Isaac over Ishmael. What other example of this truth did Paul cite in 9:10-13?** (*Reread*). Paul cited the example of Jacob and Esau; God picked Jacob over Esau.

**Why was it so unusual that the older serve the younger (9:12)?** This was against all social custom of the time.

**10. What makes the example of God picking Jacob over Esau especially significant (9:10-13)?** Both these boys were sons of Isaac and had the right pedigree. They were equal in every way. They had the same father (just as Isaac and Ishmael had the same father) and the same mother (unlike Isaac and Ishmael). They were born on the same day. In fact, as twins they were even "womb mates" (!). Despite their sameness, God chose (elected) Jacob over Esau, before they were ever born, before either had done anything good nor bad.

**Observe:** Not all physical descendants of Abraham were also children of promise. God made a choice between Isaac and Ishmael and between Jacob and Esau.

**11. What can we learn about divine election from 9:10-13?** God's selection of certain people to be children of promise was made before they were ever born and is based on God's purposes, not anything people do, either good or bad.

ESV **2 Timothy 1:9** [God] . . . saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began . . .

Thus Paul made two points: **1)** God has always made selections within the family of Abraham and **2)** God's selection has nothing to do with human activity (Barclay, p. 136).

**12. In what sense did God love Jacob and hate Esau (9:12)?**\* *See Luke 14:26.* God may have felt literal hate toward Esau. Many evangelicals plaster stickers everywhere proclaiming, "God loves you". Really? Did he love Esau? Perhaps there are people today God hates in the same way. Perhaps a more thoughtful sticker would be, "God hated Esau. How does he feel about you?" \*Quoted from Malachi 1:2-3.

On the other hand, 9:12 was written in relation to God's covenant promises. God did not necessarily feel the emotion of hate toward Esau. It was only hate relative to a higher choice. The Hebrew idiom meant God preferred Jacob over Esau (Rienecker, p. 369). For example, if a woman has two suitors and finally chooses one over the other, it would be said he loved one and hated the other. Similarly, Jesus said:

ESV **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.

**Point of Paragraph: When Paul wrote the word of God had not failed, despite the fact that so many Israelites rejected Jesus, what did he mean? How has the word of God not failed?** God made promises to Abraham and his descendants. These promises are true and reliable. They have not failed because God never promised them to all Abraham's descendants, but only to those physical descendants who were also his spiritual descendants.

ESV **Romans 4:12** [Abraham is] the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

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**\*\*\*\*What determines who God chooses to have mercy on (9:14-18)?** It totally depends on God's will, not man's will or human effort. The point is that God can do whatever He chooses to do.

**In 9:14 Paul asked, "What shall we say then?" To what was he referring? What shall we say to what?** Obviously he is referring back to what he said in the previous paragraph (9:6-12), about God choosing some people over others.

**What is the answer to Paul's second question of 9:14?** There is no injustice with God.

**13. When Paul asked if there is injustice on God's part (9:14), what objection was he anticipating?** Like any good author, Paul anticipated that people would read about God's choice of Jacob over Esau (9:10-13) and exclaim, "That's not fair!" For God to sovereignly pick Jacob over Esau, without any regard for their good or bad actions, strikes at our sense of justice.

There is nothing offensive about the view that **1)** God chose Jacob because he foresaw that he would be a good guy. This view seems quite just. However, the view that **2)** God chose Jacob simply because He wanted to do so, without regard to anything Jacob did or was going to do, is most offensive. This Paul brought up the subject of injustice with God.

ESV **Genesis 18:25** Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?

If Paul believed the first view, then this was the perfect opportunity to say so in answer to the reader's anticipated objection (9:14). Instead, he went on to underscore the truth that it is totally God's choice, and that God's choice was not based on anything we do or desire.

**14. What is the difference between justice, non-justice and injustice (9:14)?**

- 1) Justice is when you get exactly what you deserve (good or bad).
- 2) Non-justice is when you don't get something bad that you do deserve; non-justice is mercy.
- 3) Injustice is when you get something bad that you don't deserve. It is to be mistreated.

**Perspective:** It is important that we get our perspective right: God is under no obligation to save anybody. God has chosen some for mercy and the rest God passes over. One group gets **mercy** and the other group gets **justice**. No one ever gets **injustice**; mercy is non-justice, but it is not injustice. Thus, there is no injustice with God (9:14); there is justice and there is mercy, but no injustice.

Paul wants his readers to understand that when we read about Jacob and Esau and are tempted to object it is not fair, the last thing we want from God is fairness or justice. If God is just, we all go to hell. Instead, what we want from God is mercy.

**15. According to 9:15, on whom does God have mercy? (Reread) See Exodus 32 & 33.**

Paul here quoted Exodus 33:19, God speaking to Moses, to make the point that God has mercy on whomever He wants to have mercy. God spoke the words of Exodus 33:19 to Moses right after the golden calf incident. All the people deserved death, but God only punished 3,000 of them. The rest were shown mercy. It is God's choice (prerogative). Mercy, by definition, is not obligatory. A convicted criminal cannot go up to the judge and demand mercy.

ESV **Psalms 115:3** Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

**16. Based on 9:16, upon whom and what does God's mercy obviously not depend? It does not depend on human will or effort. God is not obligated to show mercy to anyone.**



This verse alone should forever put an end to the tunnel of time view of election (that God's election is based on his foreknowledge of who would believe in Jesus).

**According to 9:17-18, why did God raise Pharaoh up to a position of authority? (Reread)**

It was to accomplish God's purposes of proclaiming God's might in all the earth by hardening and then destroying Pharaoh.

**Insight:** In Exodus 8:15, 19, 32 Pharaoh hardened his own heart. In Exodus 9:12, 10:1, 20, 27 God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Don't resume on God's grace. Don't presume you can reject Jesus today but accept him later, at a time of your own choosing.

ESV **Isaiah 55:6** Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near . . .

**17. Based on 9:17-18, what factors play into determining whether God has mercy or hardens?** The two factors in Pharaoh's case were showing God's power and proclaiming His might.

**False View:** In some theology, God is impotent before the almighty sinner's choice. Poor God can only wait on the sidelines, wringing his hands, hoping people will believe in Jesus so He can have mercy on them. Not so! God shows mercy totally at his prerogative and even hardens others.

**18. What does it mean for God to harden someone (9:18)?** Since God is not the author of evil and since He never tempts anyone to sin, for God to harden someone may mean He simply leaves them alone to do what comes naturally. A dam has to be built to keep water from flowing downhill. To harden someone God merely removes the dams. God takes away the normal restraints to their sin nature. In the case of someone like Pharaoh, he may elevate him above the law (absolute power corrupts absolutely). He may remove the restraint of love of family.

**What is the point of Ro 9:18?** That God does what God wants to do. God chose Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Moses over Pharaoh and you over the unbeliever down the street.

### So What?

**19. Explain how the word of God has not failed regarding Israel.**

**20. Why do most Israelites not believe in Jesus?**

**21. How does the truth about God's election apply to our own salvation?**

**Credit Due:** Much of the information in this lesson was taken in general from R.C. Sproul's audio series, *Chosen By God*.

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

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