

**Not Ashamed  
(Week 23)  
Romans 9:1-16  
“God’s Sovereign Choice”**

**Introduction**

**“...I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”** **Romans 9:15**

Immediately following Paul’s famous declaration of the faith that **“nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus”**. He turns his attention to his Jewish brethren and declares:

**“I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying; my conscience testifies to me through The Holy Spirit — that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh blood.”** **Romans 9:1-3**

What exactly is he saying here? He is saying that although he knows that he cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ, that he would be willing to endure such separation, if only the nation of Israel would come to faith in Jesus. The word that he uses for “cursed” (*anathema* in the Greek) actually means “to be eternally damned, separated from God”. In short, Paul is saying that he would be willing to spend his eternity in hell, if he could reach the nation of Israel for Christ! Can you imagine what the Church would be like if we all had such selfless passion for the lost and dying in this world? Paul knew that it was impossible to lose the security he had in Christ, but would have been willing nonetheless to die and take the place of his brothers and sisters that had refused to believe. **That** my friends is the heart of an evangelist.

Would to God, that we all realize that the church is not a place for us to feel comfortable and fit in, but rather, it is a place where we are willing to sacrifice all that we are, in order to save some. Paul understood this completely. He would have traded his eternal security for that of his people. I spoke with someone just this past week, who had lost someone dear to them. Without hesitation, they declared that they would have been more than willing to die in their stead. That is love, and I don’t just mean affection. I mean supernatural love. It is the very same love that Christ demonstrated, when He laid down His life for us.

**“But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** **Romans 5:8**

Paul ached for his people to be saved, but he also realized that even his own deepest desires could not bring salvation to the Jews. He had been accused of being the enemy of his people, because of his preaching of salvation, by grace through faith, and not of works. But nothing could have been further from the truth. Paul preached, because he loved his people. He had once been just as zealous to put an end to Christianity as any of the Pharisees, but he had seen the light on that lonely Damascus road, and now, he knew that God’s grace was the only hope for all mankind. He understood more than anyone the resistance that he endured, but nothing could stop him from warning others to escape the wrath that is to come upon those who are without Christ. The suffering he endured would be worth the glory that would come, when the sons of God would be revealed (**Romans 8:18-19**). And Paul wanted to see the number of those “sons” increase exponentially as a result of his witness.

Paul knew that only a work of The Spirit could bring this hope of his to a reality. God The Father would have to do a work in His people, before they would embrace his Son. And not everyone of Jewish descent would be saved, only those that God chose to bring to himself. For salvation is not granted based upon Man’s **Desire**, **Descent**, nor **Deeds**. It is only accomplished by the sovereign choosing of an all-knowing God. God’s promises to Israel would be kept, just as surely as the promises He makes to all believers, but **“...not all who are descended from Israel... are Israel (vs.6)”**. Please allow me to explain.

We have been chosen:

**Not by Desire (vs. 1-5)**

**"I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying; my conscience testifies to me through The Holy Spirit — that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters, my own flesh and blood. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of The Law, the temple service, and the promises. The ancestors are theirs, and from them, by physical descent, came the Christ, Who is God over all, praised forever. Amen."**

**Romans 9:1-5**

Paul would have given anything to see his fellow Jews find salvation in Christ. He longed for it with every fiber of his being. But he also realized that having the desire was not enough to save them. He lists all of the advantages (Seven plus one) that the children of Israel possessed, far beyond that of the Gentiles, and yet, by and large, the nation had rejected its Messiah.

1. Israel is the only nation that God has ever promised to adopt as a son (**Exodus 4:22**). He called them out of Egypt. 2. And not only that, he manifested His Shekinah Glory to lead them in the wilderness and fill The Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle that Moses constructed for Him. They not only had God's miracles to behold, but they also beheld His glory.

3. Furthermore, God established His covenants with them. Covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David to name a few. 4. Along with the covenant promises, the nation of Israel was given The Law of Moses, and 5. The special privilege of Priestly Service by the Levites. 6. God promised to bring forth His Messiah from Israel. The Seventh advantage was that of the patriarchs themselves Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whose lineage came the eighth and final blessing bestowed upon the nation of Israel; the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ our LORD. And yet, in spite of all these advantages, Israel has, on a national level, rejected the gift of grace that God offered to them first. Israel, this "firstborn" of God, much like Esau, despised their very birthright, so it was handed down to another... The Gentiles. And those Gentiles, who were given much less to go on, were coming to faith in droves.

Paul realized that this was in fact God's sovereign plan. And no matter how much he desired it, the nation of Israel would be put on hold until the fullness of the Gentiles had come to faith. The truth here is a simple one; man's desire cannot bring about saving faith. In fact, not only can we not bring someone else into faith by wishing for it, we also cannot bring about our own salvation by simply by longing for it. For:

**"There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God."** **Romans 3:11**

So you see, you cannot save anyone by simply desiring it to happen. You cannot "pray someone into heaven". And you yourself were not saved because you desired Christ. You were saved because Christ chose you. Before you were born... He foreknew you (**Romans 8:29**). You did not choose Him. He chose you. And to be chosen by Him is the only means of salvation. In **Matthew 22**, Jesus tells a parable about a wedding banquet that a king was giving in honor of his son, to which several had been invited. When the gathering took place one of the guests had shown up without his wedding clothes on. It was customary in those days for a king to furnish wedding garments for all the attendees. So, for the man not to have on his wedding garment, meant that he had refused to wear what the king had required. Apparently, he felt that his own clothing would be suitable enough for the occasion. He was, according to the parable, summarily dismissed by the king and thrown outside. Jesus finishes the story by saying:

**"For many are invited, but few are chosen."**

**Matthew 22:14**

If you are going to come to salvation, my friends, then you must be invited by God, and then, be clothed in the righteousness of Christ in order to be accepted. No one will be at the great wedding feast

of The LORD, unless they have been invited and chosen. And God Himself is responsible for both! He chooses you, and He clothes you in Christ, and you shall never be condemned.

### **Not by Descent (vs. 6-9)**

**“Now it is not as though The Word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Neither is it the case that all of Abraham’s children are his descendants. On the contrary, your offspring will be traced through Isaac. That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God’s children, but the children of the promise are considered to be offspring. For this is the statement of the promise: At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.”** **Romans 9:6-9**

If you carefully read the account of Abraham’s life in the book of *Genesis*, you will find that he fathered more than one child. In fact, his first born son, Ishmael, was born some fourteen years before Isaac. By tradition, as the first born child, Ishmael should have received the blessing that accompanied being the oldest. But God had another plan in mind. Although He promised to provide for Ishmael, it was Isaac that was chosen to continue Abraham’s lineage and receive the promises of God. God had promised that through Isaac, Abraham would be a blessing to the whole world. This promise was fulfilled, when Christ came through the family tree of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

After Sarah died, Abraham remarried and actually fathered six more children in his old age! And just like Ishmael, none of these children were chosen by God to receive the promised blessing. Now Ishmael, as well as, all those other children were, in fact, physical descendants of Abraham. So, why did they not receive the same inheritance as Isaac? Because they were not CHOSEN to receive it.

The point that Paul is making here is simple. Just because a person is born a Jew, does not guarantee their salvation. God’s promises, that were made to Israel, were made to the nation and not to individuals. Among those descendants of Abraham, only a “remnant” of them would be chosen to receive salvation. God would keep His Word, but this does not mean that *everyone* who descended from Abraham would automatically be saved. Just like everyone else, the only way that a Jew can receive salvation is to place their faith in the Son of God.

This same truth applies to us all. You are not saved because your grandmother was a believer. You can only come to Christ, if the Spirit of God draws you and compels you to believe. You have to be chosen in order to become a “son of promise”. Paul longed for his Jewish brethren to be saved. He knew that God had made great promises to the nation of Israel. But he also understood that a promise to save a nation is not the same as a promise to everyone who lives there. For example, America is a very prosperous nation. On this we would all agree, but we also realize that not everyone in America has prospered.

Being Jewish doesn’t save a person... believing in Christ does. *The Bible* is clear that one day the nation of Israel will come to faith in Christ.

**“Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer in the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem, and they will look at Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly for Him as one weeps for a firstborn.”** **Zechariah 12:10**

No, God has not forgotten the promises that He made to Israel, or to those He made to the patriarchs. He will keep each and every one. But He will do so by His own sovereign election. While it is true that the nation of Israel has rejected the Messiah, after the “times of the Gentiles” are completed, Israel will be saved. It is all part of God’s predestined plan for his chosen people. But no one can be saved by their descent. Only by faith in The LORD Jesus Christ shall the sins of men be forgiven.

**“This Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”** **Acts 4:11-12**

**Not by Deeds (vs. 10-16)**

**“And not only that, but Rebekah conceived children through one man, our father Isaac. For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to election might stand — not from works but from the One Who calls — she was told, The older will serve the younger. As it is written: I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau. What should we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! For He tells Moses, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it does not depend on human will or effort but on God Who shows mercy.”**

**Romans 9:10-16**

There it is then. God calls whomever He chooses to salvation. It is not based upon man’s desire, man’s descent, nor man’s effort. God, in His sovereign, omniscient will, chooses for Himself, those who will be His. He is the only one Who is qualified to do so.

Jacob and Esau were twins. Esau was born first, and by Jewish tradition should have been the one to receive the blessings of the firstborn. God, in His all-knowing and all-seeing wisdom, chose Jacob as the one who would receive the covenant promises concerning the Messiah’s ancestry. The decision was made long before the children were ever born. God foreknew which one He would choose. It wasn’t based upon a single thing they had done. This is a powerful message to any who would believe that by their own good deeds they will be accepted by God.

In Paul’s day, the church at Rome would have been comprised of mostly Gentiles, but there were some Jews there as well. These people no doubt would have many questions regarding their Jewish heritage. More than likely, they had been disowned by their families when they accepted Christ. Some of the most pressing questions they would have had for Paul would be, “If God made all those promises to Israel, has He decided not to keep them?” And “If God didn’t keep those promises, then how can we know He will keep the ones He made to The Church?”

Paul wanted to reassure in the church in Rome that The LORD always keeps His word. Every promise that He made to Israel would in fact be kept, as well as, every promise that He has made to His Church. However, God’s promises need to be fully understood. And to understand His sovereign election is a very important part in doing just that. God chooses those who will be His. Just as He led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and not all of them were allowed to enter the promised land, not everyone who is descended from Abraham will be saved. In fact, Paul quotes the words spoken to Moses when the children of Israel rebelled in the wilderness and worshipped the golden calf. Moses begged for the lives of his people that day saying something very similar to Paul’s own words:

**“Now if you would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book You have written.”**

**Exodus 32:32**

God spared many of those who sinned against Him that day, but many were destroyed as well. Afterward God said to Moses:

**“...I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”**

**Romans 9:15 (Exodus 33:19)**

So you see, it is God Who chooses who shall be saved from the wrath that is to come. He will keep every promise He has made, for He cannot lie (**Hebrews 6:18**). But make no mistake, the choosing is His and His alone to make. We are not saved by our own *Desire*, *Descent*, nor *Deeds*. Or as Paul would say:

**“It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”**

**Romans 9:16 (NIV)**

Aren’t you grateful that He has shown mercy... upon you?  
Let all The LORD’S chosen ones say... **TRUTH!!!**